The Sacred Heart and the Catholic Home

by Father Edward Francis Garesché

Preface

The contents of this little book deal with the sublime devotion to the Sacred Heart and its practical application and fruitfulness in the Catholic home This is an age when the sanctity of home is threatened in many ways, its paramount interests attacked by evil influences, and its holy atmosphere profaned by many insidious forms of indifference and worldliness. As an antidote for this worldliness and as a means of warming the frozen charity of these latter days, our Lord revealed to Saint Margaret Mary the riches of the devotion to His Sacred Heart.

Who can doubt but that the Lover of mankind, in giving this sublime devotion to the world, had in mind especially the protection and saving of the Catholic home from the dangers and evils which He saw approaching? It is surely a safeguard and protection to the Catholic family from the advancing tides of worldliness and irreligion, and the dangerous distractions and subtle allurements of modern times, which are proving so deeply inimical to the holiness and unity of the home.

It is with a view to promoting this desire of the Sacred Heart, and of calling attention to the riches to be found in this devotion for the sanctifying of Catholic homes, that these pages are offered to the reader in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Most of these chapters have appeared in the pages of the *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* and due acknowledgments are made for the editor's kind consent to reprint them here. Some suggestions are made in the introductory chapter for the use of these reflections during the devotion of the Holy Hour. The Feast of Christ the King, recently established by the Holy Father, has as one of its great purposes the true and effective reign of Jesus Christ in every Catholic home. We trust this book may have a little share in fulfilling this great purpose. Finally, a little prayer is asked for the writer of these pages and for all who may read them devoutly.

- Feast of Christ the King
- 30 October 1927

The Devotion of the Holy Hour

Some readers may wish to use this book for the public or private devotion of the "Holy Hour," which our Lord Himself recommended to Saint Margaret Mary. "The Holy Hour consists of an hour of mental or vocal prayer," says the "Handbook of the Apostleship of Prayer," "in union with the prayer of the Saviour in the Garden of Olives on Maundy Thursday night."

"As a practice," continues the "Handbook," "it is our Lord Himself Who instituted it, determined its end and essential feature: an hour of prayer in union with His Heart in agony in Gethsemane. For Saint Margaret Mary tells us in her writings that one day, in 1673, while she was adoring the Blessed Sacrament, the Saviour suddenly appeared to her. His wounds shone like suns, and His Sacred Heart was like a furnace from which dazzling flames shot forth.

"After complaining of the ingratitude of men and recommending the Communion of Reparation, He added: 'Every night, between Thursday and Friday, I will make you partake of that sorrow unto death which it was My will to suffer in the Garden of Olives. . . . To join with Me in the humble prayer was I then offered to My Father; you shall rise between eleven o'clock and midnight; you shall prostrate yourself with Me, for one hour, with your face to the ground, both to appease the anger of God by imploring mercy for sinners, and to sweeten in some way the bitterness I felt when My Apostles abandoned Me, being unable to watch one hour with Me.'"

"Thus, to repair the ingratitude of men; to partake of the sadness of the Heart of Jesus in agony; to implore mercy for sinners; to appease the anger of God; such is the end of the Holy Hour."

In using this book, therefore, it should be explained to those who make the Holy Hour that these reflections are made in union with the thoughts and the prayers of our Blessed Saviour during His agony in the Garden. Surely, these momentous interests of the family and the home were vividly present to the agonized Heart of our Divine Lord at Gethsemane.

The Sacred Heart, Source of Peace in the Home

Devotion to the Sacred Heart does not consist merely in sentiment or pious feeling. It is true that the deepest and tenderest feelings of our heart are stirred up by this priceless devotion, and in its exercise all the noblest sentiments of our being are called into action. But a devotion which stops short at tender feelings is not worthy of the name. To be genuine and sincere, our love for the Heart of our Blessed Lord must show itself in deeds as well as in desires, in imitation as well as admiration, in work and sacrifice as well as in contemplation.

The spirit of the Sacred Heart is a spirit of generous self-sacrifice, for the sake of others. This is one of the first lessons which the study and the imitation of that adorable Heart will teach us. It is a lesson fruitful in many holy consequences for the welfare of the Catholic family; but let us direct our thoughts to the efficacy of the spirit of self-sacrifice in honor of the Sacred Heart, to insure to the Catholic family the spirit of peace.

There is no one, be he Christian or pagan, who does not desire for his home the blessing of peace. An atmosphere of peace and repose from the troubles of the day is one of the dearest qualities of the home. On the contrary, a home where peace does not abide is no home at all. Men are driven by dissensions and wars to flee their own firesides and to seek elsewhere the peace that they do not find at home.

But the peace of home requires from all the members of the family a constant self-sacrifice. There must be forbearance, one with another. Urging of one's own opinions begets disputes which mar the quiet of the home. Claiming one's own rights gives rise to bitter quarrels. To be insistent on one's own tastes and desires, to urge one's own preferences, makes others resentful and dissatisfied. Yet, it is our human nature to want to do all these things, and we need the spirit of self-sacrifice to enable us to exercise the self-control and the forbearance required to refrain from doing always as we are

inclined.

By the help of devotion to the Sacred Heart, deeply understood and perseveringly practiced, we shall acquire this spirit of sacrifice and be enabled to preserve the peace of our home. On the other hand, a home in which there is not peace cannot be said to practice in the fullest degree this admirable devotion. Our Blessed Lord is the Prince of Peace. It is His will that there shall be peace among all His followers. In an atmosphere of harmony and concord, His love and His service prosper. But in the home where there is quarreling and dissension, rancor and divisions, the devotion to the Sacred Heart cannot flourish as it should.

The very sight of that holy image, that Heart flaming with love, encircled by the crown of thorns, surmounted by the cross, pierced for us all, should serve to allay the dissensions of the Catholic home and to put all its members in that attitude of mutual forbearance, tender charity, and patient tolerance of one another's faults and foibles, which will dispel all quarrels and differences. In moments of vexation or annoyance, when the temper is too sorely tried and the words of anger or fault-finding are about to break forth from our lips, let us fix our eyes on the image of the Sacred Heart and pray to be given grace to imitate the patience and the meekness of our Blessed Saviour.

"Learn of Me," He says to us, as we regard that holy image, "for I am meek, and humble of heart!" Moving words, in which our Lord offers His Sacred Heart to us as a model of meekness and humility. It is from harshness and pride that most family quarrels are born and by these vices dissensions are nurtured. If we but imitate the meekness and humility of the Heart of Jesus, there will be peace in the Catholic home.

Let us each examine, in the light of these reflections, how he or she practices the imitation of the Sacred Heart in cultivating meekness and humility in the family circle, in deferring to all, yielding to all where there is no question of duty or principle, being ready to serve rather than to command, having respect for the desires and opinions of others, not forcing our own will and our own opinion upon all at the cost of harmony and peace. By correcting what has been amiss in these regards in the past and by imitating our gentle

Lord in His mildness and lowliness, we shall excellently manifest in deeds more eloquent than words, that we are in very truth disciples of His Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart, Inspiration of Unselfishness in the Catholic Home

The favorite worship of the world is the worship of self. An ill-ordered self-love is the canker that eats the vitals of modern society. Men think only of themselves, plan only for themselves, care only for themselves, and disregard and trample on the rights and interests of others if those interests and rights interfere with the pleasures and gain which they desire for themselves. From this selfishness spring many of the disorders of individuals and of nations. From this are born public and private wars. The injustice and oppression exercised against the poor, the disputes that agitate society, have for the most part their root in a love of self, which seeks more than it can justly claim and refuses to give due consideration to the rights and claims of other men.

On the other hand, the religion of Christ, our Lord, is the religion of the love of God and of one's neighbor for the sake of God. "Little children," said our Lord, "love one another; as I have loved you, do you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." We are thus bidden to make the love of the Sacred Heart for us, the measure of our love for one another. The imitation of the Sacred Heart of our Lord, the following of His example of disinterested charity, will cure in our hearts the disease of self-love which is epidemic in our times. Looking on the image of Christ's Sacred Heart, we are forever reminded that it becomes us, as His followers, to practice always a most unselfish charity for our neighbor.

For this reason the devotion to the Sacred Heart should be in Catholic homes an antidote against selfishness, that sore plague which so hinders and destroys the happiness and holiness of the home. Selfishness is contagious and deadly in the family circle. If there are one or two of the family group who insist overmuch on their own rights and privileges, are unwilling to make sacrifices for the common good, are disobliging and perverse, and have forever to be humored and waited on, the presence of these selfish ones sours the atmosphere of the home and begets a spirit of uneasiness and

disputing which goes far toward making the home a place of contentiousness and trouble, instead of the haven of repose from the sorrows and labors of life, which it should be, for all its members.

Those, therefore, who practice devotion to the Sacred Heart in their homes, should consider carefully before God whether they honor that most amiable Heart by the imitation of our Lord's self-sacrificing charity and complete unselfishness. They should make it one of the chief marks of their devotion, to manifest toward all, that obliging and serviceable spirit which conciliates love and harmony and casts out the spirit of self-seeking and self-love.

It is easy for the mother of a family to practice this self-sacrifice, because God has put in the heart of a mother the instinct to spend herself for the benefit of her children. But the other members of the family should look to it that all the self-sacrifice and thoughtfulness for others be not left to the mother. They should lead, or go before, one another in charity, as Saint Paul expresses it, trying who shall be beforehand in helping, ministering to, and encouraging and consoling the other members of the family circle. This unselfish love will show itself in many spontaneous and beautiful ways, if only it is cultivated by devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Moreover, such unselfishness is contagious and will spread itself from one, or a few, to all the members of the family circle, if all are equally desirous of practicing the imitation of the Sacred Heart. The contemplation of the great love of our Lord for us, and of His divine unselfishness and self-sacrifice in manifesting that love, will make us desire to show a similar love and unselfish serviceableness to others. They in their turn, understanding the source and reason of that love, will be fired to imitate also the love of the Sacred Heart.

Our Lord has let us know that in no other way can we more truly serve and please His Sacred Heart, than by thus serving and helping others for His love. "Amen, I say unto you," He declares to us, "whatsoever you have done unto one of these My least brethren, you have done it unto Me." And like an echo of the words of His Divine Master, Saint John cries out: "If they do not love their neighbor whom they have seen, how shall they love God whom they have not seen?"

The Sacred Heart, Guard of the Purity of the Home

Distressing license of manners and morals is abroad in the world. This, to be sure, is not a new situation, for it springs from the old corruption and is rooted in the sad weakness of human nature. But in happier times, when manners were simpler and public opinion more severe, it would have been impossible for this laxity to flourish. It insensibly corrupts the impressionable minds of children before they have become aware of the difference between right and wrong. This laxity shows itself in fashions of speech and of dress, in amusements, pictures, the press, the moving pictures. Unless there is special vigilance on the part of the parents and of elder brothers and sisters, it invades even the Catholic home, for all these things have an extraordinary currency and a universal appeal from which it is difficult to escape.

Strong agencies, highly organized, are behind the press and work without ceasing to spread in all quarters the cheap and alluring papers and magazines which carry this infection. The commercialized amusements, which modern inventiveness has conjured, are found in all neighborhoods, and few homes are outside of the circle of their appeal. Careless parents, and those who are not sensible to the danger or to their duty, leave their children quite exposed to these bad influences, trusting that they will somehow grow up immune to the evils about them. But very sad experience shows every day that this foolish hope is very ill-founded. The child is immensely influenced by what it sees and hears. Keep it under influences that are holy and pure, and it will remain pure until that age of self-control is attained, when the will can safely be trusted to withstand temptation. Expose it to evil influences at the tender and impressionable age, and its white soul will become sullied and its young mind stained.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart, which is, so to say, a compendium of what is holy and pure, will be an extraordinary aid to parents to safeguard the purity of their homes. The very presence of a picture of the Sacred Heart, set up in a prominent place in the home, is a

constant reminder and incentive to special care in regard to purity and edification. Like the picture of the Blessed Mother of God, the image of the Sacred Heart silently rebukes and restrains too great freedom of speech and of action, and where the representation of our Blessed Lord, pointing to His adorable Heart, is exposed and venerated, a decent and becoming purity comes to dwell.

Indeed, if the meaning of this devotion is understood, it will easily be seen how utterly opposed it is to any sinful license of speech, dress, amusements, or reading. It is the object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart to make amends to our Lord for the coldness and ingratitude of men and for the many sins with which they have wounded His most adorable Heart. A keen sense of the malice of sin and a deep regret for every offense which inflicts so deep a wound on the tender and merciful Heart of our Saviour is of the essence of this devotion. It is a devotion of reparation, of atonement, and of compensation to the Sacred Heart for the pains which sin has caused to God, made man for our redemption.

By an instinct of their Catholic hearts, the faithful realize how specially offensive to the most pure Heart of our Lord is everything which wounds the virtue of purity. They will, therefore, keep far away from the presence of His image the objects, papers, pictures, amusements, and ways of speech which offend against that angelic virtue. The practice of true devotion and reparation to the Heart of Christ includes a careful vigilance, lest we ourselves, or anyone belonging to us, offend that loving Lord to Whom we are bent on making atonement. Looking on the likeness of that Heart, so deeply wounded by the sins of men, so completely at enmity to whatever is vile, sinful, and impure, every member of a Catholic home devoted to the Sacred Heart is irresistibly reminded to love and cultivate the holy virtue of purity and to avoid as a plague whatever is impure.

When the meaning of that holy image, and the nature of the devotion to the Sacred Heart are explained to the children of the family, it should be impressed upon them how consoling to our Lord is the perfect practice of holy purity and how offensive to Him is anything contrary to that angelic virtue. So the devotion will be for them also a constant reminder and source of strength and safety against the evil influences which, in our careless age, do not spare

even tender years, nor respect the charming innocence of the child.

Indeed, this influence of the devotion in strengthening the members of the family to resist all influences to evil is even more precious and necessary in our day, than the keeping out of the home itself whatever is dangerous or suggestive. For the life of the present time flows like an invading stream and floods with its various influences every living soul. One would have to be a hermit, indeed, not to be brought into conflict with evil which is so insidious and pervading. While it is necessary to bar the doors of the Catholic home to books, magazines, amusements, ways of action, dress, and talk that are a peril to the innocence of the child, it is, if anything, more necessary to fortify the mind and the heart of the child against the evil which will, in spite of all precautions to the contrary, assail its eyes and ears. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, for the reasons we have assigned, will serve for this protection and this strengthening. Not only do the streams of God's grace flow with the freest power through the channel of this devotion, but the very thought, that what is impure is so deeply offensive to the Sacred Heart and gives it so deep a wound, will make the child the more careful to resist evil at all costs and never to give way to it.

For the sake of our dear Catholic households, then, we must take care that the devotion to the Sacred Heart is fully understood and adequately practiced by all the members of these households. In this admirable devotion, reserved by our Lord for these later times, is to be found the special medicine for our special ills. In no one of our many present-day problems is the practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart more necessary and of more singular efficacy than it is in safeguarding the much-threatened purity of the Catholic home.

The Sacred Heart, Comforter of the Catholic Home

The coming of pain and of sorrow - who can avert or even delay it? In God's good providence grief comes, now in this form, now in that other, to the sheltered and guarded sanctuary of the home. Now it is misfortune, now bereavement, sometimes the departure of a loved one from the home circle, now material loss, now sickness, now dishonor. There are, alas, so many doors at which suffering can come in. The close intimacy and the mutual love which are the very air of a Catholic home, can assuage in some way the bitter agony of the heart, but they do not protect us from sorrow; nay, sometimes the very closeness of that intimate sympathy increases the sum-total of our pain by making us sharers in the griefs of all those about us.

We have evident need, then, of a consoler. We cannot bear our griefs alone, nor will the comradeship of those about us always suffice to take the edge from sorrow. There are times when the whole family circle, tried almost beyond endurance by the weight of some sudden calamity or the weariness of some long-endured misfortune, looks beyond its own number for consolation. Our Blessed Lord, in such moments most of all, offers to the Catholic home the most sure, most deep, and most heavenly consolation.

It was the desire to console as well as the desire to redeem mankind that moved the infinite compassion of the eternal Son of God to wish to become man to Save us. He took pity on the multitude of our sorrows. He resolved to take upon Himself our human nature with its pains, its weakness, and its weariness, and to become like us, as Saint Paul says, in all things - sin alone excepted. The greatness of this condescension and the infinity of this compassion we shall never realize, for to realize it would require the realization of the infinity of God. Yet in heaven we shall see more clearly what it means for the omnipotent to be clad in weakness, for the All-Holy to suffer, for the All-Blessed God to take upon Himself a nature like ours and to become blood brother to the lost and fallen race of Adam, so as to lift us up and console us whom only a God-man could save.

That even the most ignorant might know the depth of His love and the might of His compassion, our Lord suffered Himself to be raised on a cross and to die on that most cruel and shameful gibbet, so as to give to all ages the image of the Crucified in which the greatest sufferings of man can read the most supreme consolation. Before that sacred symbol of God dying for our sake, our complaints are rebuked and our vastest griefs dwindle to nothings. It cost our Lord the most incomprehensible agony to leave to us that legacy of the crucifix, but His sorrows have sweetened forever the cup of all those who believe in Him and love Him.

Yet to us, of these later days, our Saviour has vouchsafed a further blessing. Opening that sacred wound of His side, which He still bears for an eternal witness of His love and suffering and wears even in the glory of Heaven, He has showed us His Sacred Heart, reminding us of that furnace of love, of that ocean of pity and compassion which waits, with its deeps beyond deeps of strength and consolation, to be the resource of our weak hearts and shallow courage in every trial. One look upon the image of that burning Heart, one thought of His words to Saint Margaret Mary, will bring us courage in the sharpest trial and make us kiss the hand that smites us, in memory of the tenderness and love of the Sacred Heart, without Whose leave no suffering can approach us.

Thus, the presence in the Catholic home of a picture or image of the Sacred Heart is a constant source of consolation. The Israelites looked on the brazen serpent which Moses set up among them, and by the sight they were healed of the stings of the living serpents that plagued them. So the sight of the image of our Lord, wounded for us, bruised for our healing, will remind us of His boundless love for us, of the consolation that our patience and resignation in suffering can afford Him, and so the sight will heal our hearts, stung by the trials and the misfortunes that invade our home. Thus, the mere presence in the house of images of the Sacred Heart is in itself a fountain of consolation.

But the deep understanding and practice of the devotion itself is a greater comfort in adversity and a shield against the bitterness of sorrow. Reparation to the Heart of our Lord for the negligence and injuries of mankind is admirably made by the patient endurance

and the offering up for His love, both the little trials of every day and the greater trials which come from time to time. The saints, full of a holy courage and intimate friends of the Sacred Heart, sought after and desired suffering and adversity so as to be like their suffering Lord - His close companions and the sharers of His lot on earth. We, who lack the heroism of the saints to desire and to seek for suffering, may at least find courage to bear patiently for Christ's sake what Providence sends us. We shall feel that one of the sweetest comforts on earth is to remember in the midst of suffering that our every pang, patiently and lovingly borne for His sake, is a consolation to the Heart of Christ.

We cannot escape from sorrow. We cannot shield our beloved homes from sometimes feeling the pressure of human trials. But we can insure, for ourselves and for those who are dear to us, the greatest, surest, mightiest consolation in any ill that God allows to befall us. We shall do so, if we take care to cultivate in our home a true, intelligent, and deep devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart and the Heart of Youth

Youth is a precious and also a perilous time. It is precious because of its hope, its unbounded possibilities, its freshness, and tenderness; it is perilous by reason of these very same qualities. The impressionableness of youth, its eagerness, its inexperience, and its unspoiled anticipations are interesting and appealing. But it is the time of momentous decisions, of strong passions and feverish desires, of impulse and fancy, which unchecked and unguided may ruin a life. Literature and proverbial speech is full of expressions of the irrevocableness of youthful choices. "The boy is father to the man," says an ancient saw. And Pope, in one of his formal couplets has put the same truth in meter:

> "Tis education forms the youthful mind,
> And as the twig is bent the tree's inclined."

If any time of life, then, needs strong impulses to holiness, powerful and effective aids to goodness, it is assuredly the time when we are young. Impressions then sink into the soft stuff of the forming character and help to mold it for life. Habits made then endure as long as body and soul hold together. Ideals above all, ideals which affect so deeply the generous heart of youth, when they are embraced and loved by the young, keep their sway until declining years.

For all these reasons, a real and deep devotion to the Sacred Heart, precious to every age, has a particular significance and appeal to the hearts of the young. There is in those young hearts a depth of devotion, a capacity for nobleness and self-sacrifice, which waits for some great object to call it forth. Show them a great ideal, win their loyalty to a worthy purpose, and they are able to develop a degree of love and generosity which more calculating age can sometimes scarcely attain.

In the Heart of Christ, an ideal at once the most lofty and the most appealing is, so to say, bodied forth. It is impossible to put into words the beauty, sweetness, and strength of Him Who is the Word made Flesh. As Christ, in His mortal life, was beset forever by the

crowds of men, who pressed about Him, hung on His speech, and were swayed by the ineffable charm of His sacred Humanity, so through all ages the hearts of the young, drawn to Him by faith and love, cling in like manner about His Sacred Heart. He, the Teacher, the Master of hearts, can save youth from its perils, can guide it in its fervent desires, can satisfy its eagerness, and calm its passions. Nor, we may dare to say, is there any work or influence more dear to Him than that which has to do with the unspoiled hearts of youth.

But to exercise its right sway, this devotion must be intelligent, strong, and sincere. The appeal of the Sacred Heart is not hard to understand, yet it is sometimes misunderstood. Whoever would think that this devotion is a matter of sentimentality, of mere feeling, would commit an error fatal to the influence of the devotion on the heart of youth, injurious indeed to the devotion itself. In truth, it is based on reason, on faith, on the deepest and noblest feelings of the human heart. Explain it to the young as it truly is, in a way to interest and enlighten them, and it will, of its own power, win and possess their hearts.

It is a calamity to the world that the Sacred Heart, the appeal of Christ's pure and endless love, is so little known and so little realized by the world. It is our business to make it better and better known. One has only to open the windows and let the great light of the sun shine into a room, to purify its atmosphere and make it fresh and clean. So, too, if we can open the windows of a soul to the light of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, it becomes forthwith pure and holy. The more unspoiled that soul, the more open to the rays of this great devotion, the more it will be enlightened, warmed, and purified. Thence the importance of appealing to the souls of the young and pouring into their hearts the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

With this devotion, all blessings will come to them. Purity will be fostered, piety encouraged, fervor and zeal enhanced. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament flows necessarily from devotion to the Sacred Heart. A tender love of the Blessed Mother, in imitation of the Sacred Heart, a horror of sin, which has wounded It, a love of sacrifice in imitation of It, a zeal for souls to satisfy It - all these

may be cultivated in young hearts by devotion to the Sacred Heart. Ina word, the efforts we make to plant a deep and true love of that Heart of Christ in the souls of youth are fruitful of all blessings. Even the ardor of youth cannot go astray, if it is linked to the saving Heart of God.

The Sacred Heart and the Heart of the Maiden

The spring of the year is at once a beautiful and a hazardous season. Its warm suns awake a profusion of charming blossoms on every tree, but its sudden frosts and dangerous winds can blight in a moment the hope of the fruitage. The hopes for the summer are often assured or ruined by the spring.

It is so of the springtime of life. Then, as at no other season, does the welfare of after days tremble in the balance. Generous hopes burst into vivid flowers under the sun of youth. But the character and the heart are as susceptible to untoward influences as are the blossoms of springtime. Those who have the care of souls and the culture of hearts must be as solicitous for youth as the careful gardener is for his springtime flowers.

The hearts and the souls of Catholic maidens, in that springtide of their life, where they unfold in intelligence, imagination, and affections, are most like the gardens of April and May with their wealth of white blossoms, their promise of the summer's yield. The influences for good or for evil which fall on them then are potent for all life's growing, as the suns and the frosts of spring determine the garden's yield.

Very needful, then, is a pure and true devotion, intelligent and deep, to the Sacred Heart of Christ. If this devotion is in general an antidote to worldliness, the preserver of innocence, an assurance of piety and peace, it is especially so to the heart of the Catholic maiden in the days of her life's white spring. An ardent love for the wounded Heart of Christ, a comprehension of the meaning of reparation, and the personal devotion to this tender and suffering Heart will shield as nothing else the life of the soul of the maiden from untoward influences and will preserve her heart clean and holy from the winds and frosts of the world.

There is need of such protection at the present time in the life of the nation. Unhappily, the sacred interests of maidenhood are disregarded, treasonably injured, and attacked on every side in

modern society. There is a looseness of conduct and speech, which is injurious to all youth and especially to maidenhood. The amusements of the time have little respect for innocence. The ways of society are sometimes no less perilous. There is a need of strength of purpose, purity of heart, a true conscience, and firm ideals to preserve the Catholic girl in that innocence and faithfulness to her duties which will insure her a holy and mature womanhood.

The more reason to plant well and deep in her heart a devotion to the Sacred Heart. This devotion makes concrete and appealing that service to Christ, consecration to His interests, and loyalty to His ideals which preserve innocence and strengthen character. Where the love of Christ enters in, the love of frivolity and dangerous amusements, the passion for trivial and tainted reading, suspicious friendships, and low tastes must give place. The love of the Sacred Heart drives out the contaminations of the world.

But to have such an effect, this devotion must be reasonable, comprehended, and sincere - not a mere emotion nor a sentiment. Deep feeling enters into the love of the Sacred Heart, but the devotion itself must be rooted in the will and planted by intelligent reflection, based on right teaching, sunk deep by reasonable exercise. A devotion without roots will fade and wither quickly in the dust and heat of this life's distractions. While in the protecting atmosphere of school, a Catholic girl may feel and practice a certain devotion; but if it is not reasonable, and deeply planted, it will soon vanish when she comes out into the broad and wind-swept avenues of life.

A real devotion to the Sacred Heart is likewise a most efficacious and powerful means of character training. Women need strong characters nowadays as well as men. In a sense they always did, but in former years the whole life of woman was indefinitely more protected and hedged about than now. Many a girl of gentle breeding was so protected in her home, so surrounded with conventions and safeguards, that she could hardly be said to be exposed at all to the world. All that is changed. Girls are sometimes almost more open to worldly influences than boys. They give the tone to youthful society. They have privileges and freedoms which

would have astonished, not to say horrified, an elder age. What the result of all this will be on the general character of women, no one can quite predict. But it is clear that Catholic maidens need more than ever to be fortified in faith, dignity, and purity.

May the devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, enter in and take possession of their hearts when they are still in the first bloom of maidenly innocence. May this deep loyalty precede all other affections. May the wounded Heart of Christ, flaming with love, surrounded with sorrow, crowned with pain borne willingly for our love, so possess those hearts with the sanctity of His influence, that all the intruding evils of the time, seeing the Master there, may pause at the threshold and shrink away confounded from an innocence and holiness which they cannot resist and in which they have no part.

The Sacred Heart and the Heart of a Man

It is one of the tragedies of things as they are, that so many men, struggling wearily in the conflicting current of that wild sea called life, are unaware either of the power or tenderness of the Heart of their greatest friend. They have need of a friend, God knows, both in the tedious striving of every day and in the fierce occasional battles with temptation and discouragement which they must fight through at intervals. But while they feel their own weakness and realize it through many sad experiences, they do not know where to turn nor whom to ask for aid.

Strange lack of realization! Many a Catholic man, desirous of living up to the high principles and holy teachings of his faith, driven by temptation and trial, afraid of his own weakness, never rightly appreciates the strength and security, the power and consolation that wait for him in devotion to the Sacred Heart. He seeks, perhaps, other friendships and to a greater or less degree they fail him. No matter how sincere and genuine they may be, his merely human friends have little power and less knowledge to aid him. Here, in the Sacred Heart, is a love for him individually which has at its service, so to say, the all-wisdom and all-power of God Himself.

The Catholic man who disregards devotion to the Sacred Heart as being, in his esteem, meant rather for children and women than for men, shows an ignorance and a want of realization that shames him and his teachers. The very symbol of the Sacred Heart, flaming with love, encircled with a crown of thorns, and crowned with a cross, is in itself a book wherein he who runs may read the manliness and strength of this sublime devotion.

Look upon this symbol, Catholic man, and ask "whose heart is here depicted?" It is the Heart of the eternal God-made Man, become like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted. Here, then, is the Heart of a Man Who is God, the manliest of men, the Man Whose courage exceeds all other courage as His strength exceeds and surpasses all other strength. What characteristic or what quality of true manliness but is found in Him to a supreme degree? What merely

human hero, what man of history or legend, past or present, can bear comparison with Him even in the mere point of manliness? Devotion to His Sacred Heart is devotion to the very ideal of manly courage, strength, and goodness. Such a devotion is most proper for all the world and, if one can say so, especially suited to the manliest man.

Look again at that holy symbol. What mean those flames which leap from the Sacred Heart? They symbolize the strong fire of manly love that burns forever in the Heart of Christ. They blaze forth the heat and power of that pure love wherewith Christ cherishes every man for whom He has died. There is in His love nothing merely sentimental, nothing selfish, nothing of the earth. It is the love of the God-man for all mankind, who are His brothers and for whom He died. Here is a Heart full of compassion and tenderness, not only for the just but for sinners. He is come to save those whom the world despises and rejects, no less than the rich and powerful. The man, therefore, who is bowed down with miseries, in need of a friend, has only to turn to the Sacred Heart. Those others, also, who are full of success and proud of their own achievements are even more in, need of the friendship of the Sacred Heart. Pride goeth before a fall and a successful man, a so-called self-made man, a man full of this world's goods, has sore need of devotion to the Sacred Heart to make him humble and save him from that blinded selfishness which leads to calamity.

Consider, Catholic man, the crown of thorns which encircles the Sacred Heart. It is the symbol of the mental anguish which Christ bore for love of you. In these days, many a man suffers agonies of anxiety and fear for his own future and for that of those whom he loves. The sympathy of the Sacred Heart will aid and sustain them as nothing else can, for here is a friend Who has drunk much deeper of the chalice of mental anguish for love of us, than it will ever be given to us to drink.

Look at the cross, the symbol of Christ's physical sufferings. None of us are so perfectly and delicately constituted as He was, and none of us can suffer as He suffered, purely for love of us. The man who has to undergo strain and weariness, physical agony, wearing toil, needs devotion to the Sacred Heart to give him courage. Christ's life was,

throughout all its years, a life of toil and suffering. He chose to be a laboring man and made, as Saint Justin tells us, "plows and yokes for oxen," rude carpentering indeed, and wearisome labor which strained His muscles and roughened His hands. This He did, that He might be the friend of the workingman, a model to all who have to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, and the comforter of the toiler.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a devotion for men; the manlier we are ourselves, the more this devotion should appeal to us. There is a false and lying idea of manliness, conceived in hell, which makes manhood consist in vice and wantonness. To follow such ideals is not to become a true man, but an unmanly and degraded brute. Devotion to the Sacred Heart has indeed nothing to do with such notions of manliness. But, to true manliness, honorable, strong, self-contained, faithful in word and deed, this great devotion is the most powerful aid. It gives support and courage. It strengthens the weak will and sets the soul on fire with the love of God. It conquers temptation and it directs the will to what is good and true. It supplies in all trials and sorrows a Friend and Consoler Who knows human nature intimately, has tasted its sorrows and trials, and Who is omnipotent and all-loving. To heal and to save is the work and the office of the Heart of Christ in the heart of a man.

The Sacred Heart and Reading in Catholic Homes

As mentioned before, devotion to the Sacred Heart should color the whole life of the Catholic home. It is indeed the love of Christ, meeting its response in the love and loyalty of our own heart. As Christ's love is a matter of our whole life and of every detail of our home, so our answering love should color intimately all the details of household life and of family intercourse.

Thus this devotion ought constantly to be kept in mind in everything which concerns the Catholic household. Particularly, it ought to show itself in the books and other publications which are allowed to come into the home and which become, as it were, a part of the home atmosphere, familiars of the family circle. The careful father and the prudent mother scrutinize diligently the companions whom their children bring home with them and the friends who enter into the family life. If some one presents himself who is obviously not a gentleman, his visits are discouraged; if he is besides a loose character, all the more reason for showing him the door. If in addition, his talk is insidiously wicked, if he deliberately corrupts the minds of the young, no decent parent would allow him entrance.

Yet, strangely enough, many a person looks with tolerance on the admission into the home of books which are as bad and dangerous in their influence as a human companion, who is ungentlemanly and evil, could possibly be.

> "Dreams, books, are each a world, and books, we know,
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good,"

sings the poet Wordsworth. Unfortunately, there is also a world of books that are impure and evil. To introduce the good ones into the Catholic home and to exclude the others with all rightful diligence is surely an acceptable service to the Sacred Heart.

Where the family dwelling place is simple and even poor, the

presence of well-chosen and delectable books makes it seem homelike and furnished. After all, simple furniture is a sign, perhaps, of modest preferences and is in better taste than sumptuous decorations. But the absence of good books from the household bespeaks a poverty of mind and spirit more lamentable than a poverty of outward conveniences. Yet books cost much less than food or clothing and, unlike these, they are not so soon consumed by use, but continue throughout the years to offer their constant service.

Good books are good thoughts in concrete form, ready at any moment to offer us the fragrance of their beauty, the balm of their consolation. Holy books are holy thoughts put into words written for permanent memory. Good and holy volumes are like vases of alabaster, full of precious ointment, ready to pour forth the sweetness of their contents whenever we will.

If, therefore, there is an abundance of good and holy books in the home, there is material for many good and holy thoughts. The habit of good reading makes a full mind, a refined character, gives tastes that are elevated, encourages a right use of leisure, develops the intelligence, stores the memory, and trains and strengthens the will.

Who can doubt, considering these things, that an abundant supply of the best Catholic books in the home makes it a fitter shrine for devotion to the Sacred Heart? When a family is consecrated to the Sacred Heart, when the image of that loving Heart is set up and honored, then those who are charged with the care of the home and its interests, should begin to consider whether or not there are in that home plenty of good Catholic books. If not, they should lose no time in securing a goodly number of those which they think will most appeal to their household. The presence of such books does constant honor to the Sacred Heart and promotes the interests of Christ. Their absence is a sign that something is wanting in the fervor and intelligence of that Catholic household.

The Sacred Heart and the Refinement of Catholic Homes

Vulgarity is one of the vices of our time. The amusements, the literature, the conversation of the day are smirched with vulgarity. Vulgarity is not precisely wickedness, but it is often found in company with wickedness. It breaks down to a degree the barriers against wickedness. Just as goodness in its higher levels brings with it refinement, so the want of refinement often brings with it temptations and incitements to sin. Thus vulgarity is dangerous. To have low tastes, to delight in vulgar reading is unworthy of a Catholic who has so many aids and incentives to be noble-minded and refined. So, also, cheap and common reading, ordinary and vulgar pictures and amusements are unworthy of the Catholic home.

By vulgar, we do not now mean what is sinful, but what is unrefined, cheap, low, though it may not necessarily be evil. A little incident will illustrate this meaning. Not long ago a group of Catholic men were acting as reviewers for some moving pictures which were to be exhibited in Catholic schools upon their approval. A film was put on the screen which had nothing at all indecent or immoral about it. The star was an actor who was simply hideous and who could twist his repulsive features into such ugly faces that the effect was ludicrous, and at the same time disgusting. It was not merely burlesque - it was the essence of vulgarity and unrefinement, though nothing at all was done contrary to decency or good morals. All of the men but one were willing to pass the film. That one, however, protested roundly.

"This is a bad film," he said. "Bad, not from the moral standpoint, but because it is so excessively vulgar. To show such hideous facial contortions to the children in our schools would be degrading to their taste and I strongly disapprove it. We must not only protect the imagination and taste of our children from what is positively evil, we must also safeguard them from vulgarity." The others, seeing the logic of his remark, agreed with him, and the film was rejected.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a mighty aid in guarding the refinement of our home and banishing from it the curse of vulgarity. The very reverence which we owe that sacred image, displayed with honor on the walls of our home, will make us wish to keep far away all that is unbecoming in the eyes of our Lord. The sight of that holy emblem will aid us to remember how lofty is our calling and how deeply we are pledged to what is noble, pure, and of good esteem. A Catholic home, consecrated to the Sacred Heart, from whose walls looks forth the blessed countenance of Christ, should be as sacred in some respects as a chapel. Pictures, magazines, books, amusements, and conversations which are tainted with vulgarity and breathe of commonness ought to be kept far away and when their presence is discovered in a home consecrated to the Sacred Heart they should be cast forth without delay.

But the devotion to the Sacred Heart will not only guard the exterior seemliness of the home; it will likewise sanctify and refine the inner life of the members of the family. To stop vulgar influences from crossing the threshold of the home is something; to prevent them from entering the doors of the mind and the heart is even a greater blessing. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, sincerely practiced, will have this second blessed efficacy. The more we love Him and are in sympathy with the interests of His Sacred Heart, the more we shall be averse to all that is beneath the dignity and nobleness of a friend of the Sacred Heart. This sublime devotion, so efficacious in guarding the purity of the home, will also safeguard its refinement. Where dwell the lovers of the Sacred Heart, that home is secure from the modern plague of vulgarity.

The Sacred Heart and the Joy of the Catholic Home

Joy is the normal state of the Christian soul. "Rejoice in the Lord," says the great apostle, "and again I say to you rejoice.' The Old Testament declares to us that melancholy has slain its thousands and there is no good in it. To rejoice interiorly and to let one's cheerfulness beam without, is the part of personal wisdom and of Christian charity. It is a great and calamitous mistake to think that piety is associated with gloom. The saints were centers of cheer and of joy, for they bore even their sorrows gladly and aided all about them to be cheerful both by their example and by their tender charity. To rejoice always is indeed possible only to the saints. In proportion as we approach their patience, their resignation to God's will, their interior detachment, we shall come more and more to fulfill more perfectly the apostle's exhortation always to rejoice in the Lord.

In the Catholic home especially, joy should be in the very air and a part of the atmosphere of the household. A gloomy home is not home at all. A pervading spirit of glumness in the house will either drive its occupants frantic or send them out of doors, seeking cheerfulness elsewhere. Joy in the house is a blessing and gloom is a curse.

The model of Catholic homes is the household of Nazareth, and who can doubt that this was a dwelling of gladness and joy? Christian painters have represented Our Lord, His Blessed Mother, and Saint Joseph in many ways and in diverse circumstances of their lives. Sometimes the joyful and sometimes the sorrowful mysteries of Christ's history have provided material for the brush. But with a Christian instinct, though they have often painted the members of the Holy Family in sorrow, they have never given to their countenances an expression of glumness or gloom. Their faces are often sorrowful, but resigned and patient sorrow does not cast out from the deeps of the heart an abiding joy. It is not sorrow which is joy's enemy, but gloom, discontent, fretfulness, a want of love of God and the neighbor; and these things never entered the

holy house of Nazareth.

To imitate this prevailing joy of the Holy Family, the members of the Catholic household have only to practice faithfully and fervently devotion to the Sacred Heart. The steadfast exercise of this devotion implants in the soul the virtues which are the roots of Christian joy. Humility, patience, resignation to the will of God, a willingness and even a desire to suffer something for the love of Christ, a yearning to imitate the Sacred Heart in sacrificing one's self for others - all these things are the fruits of this sublime devotion. Who cannot see that such virtues will bring joy into the home?

But to secure such profound results, one's devotion to the Sacred Heart must be in proportion, active and profound. It is not enough only to cherish a pious sentiment, to whisper some prayers, to feel a stirring of devotion whenever one looks upon the touching image of the bleeding and burning Heart of Our Divine Saviour, victim of His love for us. No, our devotion must go much farther; it must extend to all the emotions of our soul. When impatience or anger, jealousy or envy, rancor or bitterness, fretfulness, selfishness, resentment, revenge, stir in the soul, like dogs tugging at the chain, they must be whipped down and silenced with Christian courage in imitation of the meekness, charity, and tenderness of the Sacred Heart.

From such acts of self-sacrifice and self-control, in imitation of the Heart of Our Lord, will come a joy into the soul that earth can neither give nor take away. If each member of the family so imitates the meekness of the Heart of Christ, joy will pervade the very air of the home. There will be sorrows and suffering, for what earthly lot is complete without them? But even these, in imitation of the Sacred Heart and in union with the passion of Christ, will be received with joy.

The Sacred Heart and the Self-Sacrifice of the Catholic Home

The Christian life is built upon self-sacrifice. The emblem of Christianity is the cross, the symbol of sacrifice. Whoever will be Christ's disciple must perforce take up his cross daily and follow Him. In proportion, as one is ready to make sacrifices for the love of Christ he draws nearer and nearer to the divine Model, Who was willing to become an entire sacrifice for the love of men and of God.

In our relations with each other, no less than in our dealings with God, we must be forever prepared for sacrifice. This willingness to surrender what is dear to us for the love of God and our neighbor is the basis of charity, as it is also the foundation of friendship and of family love. No household can hold together and be at peace in charity unless its prevailing spirit be that of mutual self-sacrifice. By yielding, one to another, by giving up, one for the other, by assisting one another at the cost of personal loss, and bearing with one another at the cost of personal suffering, the members of a family preserve peace, harmony, and concord. Without this spirit of willingness to sacrifice one's self for another, there will surely come quarrels, discord, divisions, and bickerings; for it must necessarily be that the interests of one will be different from the interests of another, and that the wishes of one will run counter to the wishes of another. When this happens, either somebody must yield at the cost of personal self-sacrifice or else there will be discord. No great need to dwell long upon the necessity of the spirit of self-sacrifice in the home. Every one realizes it, at least in the case of another.

The want of this spirit of self-sacrifice makes havoc with some Catholic homes. Even where one or two of the members lack the willingness to surrender their personal likes and inclinations, their presence in the family circle is an element of discord. They must be humored and attended to at the expense of the others. The balance of life is destroyed. Things are always in an unstable equilibrium and there may be a crash at any moment.

Those who by nature have but little of this spirit of self-sacrifice may achieve a higher degree of it by the sincere practice of devotion to the Sacred Heart. That adorable Heart is the source and model of supernatural self-sacrifice. The very emblem of devotion to the Sacred Heart is a constant reminder that we should sacrifice ourselves for others as Our Lord has sacrificed Himself for us. That Sacred Heart, wounded for love; surrounded by the thorns of the intense agony which He bore willingly, immolating Himself for us; the cross which surmounts It, reminder of His sacrifice of life itself for our salvation; the flames of love, motive of His self-surrender for our salvation - all these things speak more eloquently to us than words of the willingness of our Lord to sacrifice Himself utterly for the sake of each one of us.

If our devotion to this Sacred Heart is great and deep, it will move us to immolate ourselves for others as He has immolated Himself for us. True love, and true devotion, suppose the faithful imitation of the one whom we devotedly admire and love. The more ardently we are inflamed with affection toward the Sacred Heart, the more we shall wish to imitate the self-sacrifice of our Lord. Since He has pointed to our brethren and bidden us see Himself in them, assuring us that what we do to our brother we do to Him, we shall be moved more and more to sacrifice ourselves for others and to repay our Lord for His sacrifices for us.

Thus the members of the Catholic home who practice true devotion to the Sacred Heart will feel growing within them the spirit of Christian self-sacrifice. Looking on the image of our Lord's wounded and suffering Heart, they will be willing to be wounded and to suffer for others. And this disposition of self-sacrifice and love in honor of the Sacred Heart will fill the family circle with charity, happiness, and peace.

The Sacred Heart and the Tranquility of the Catholic Home

The human heart yearns after tranquillity because it craves happiness, and peace is a condition of happiness. In strife and trouble, uneasiness and warfare, happiness is impossible. Therefore, even those who are in the midst of wars fight but for peace, dream only of peace.

Unhappily, in this wretched world, war and strife are common; peace is rare and difficult. The histories of men and of nations are made up in great measure of battles. The reason for this is to be found in the passions of our fallen nature which break from control and hurry along individuals and peoples into conflicts which destroy their peace. A man's life on earth, says the book of Job, is the life of a mercenary and his days are like those of a hired soldier. Within and without us we are assailed by wars.

Our Blessed Lord, Who came on earth to restore human nature, ruined and lost through the sin of Adam, came as the Prince of Peace. He alone, Who is both God and Man, is able to save us from the misery of our own nature and to set us back again on the height from which we have fallen. Through Him alone we may hope to regain the peace of the terrestrial paradise. But this Christian peace will not lie in the immunity from death and the calm balance and mastery of their powers which our first parents enjoyed in the state of their original innocence. It will consist rather in this, that the grace of Christ will enable us so to struggle against our evil inclinations that by much patience we may attain peace.

In the circle of a Catholic home, there must be peace. If joy is needful there, peace is even more required. There cannot be even the appearance of a Christian spirit in the home without an abiding peace. Where war enters in, it is certain that the spirit of Christ departs, for is not He the Prince of Peace?

In homes, as in nations, human passion and selfishness are the cause of wars. The members of a family cannot be at peace with one another unless each is master of himself and able to control passion

and selfishness. Where the members of the family give way to anger, impatience, pride, selfishness, sloth, they cannot rightly accomplish their duties toward one another and so there cannot be peace. Self-mastery on the part of each is necessary for the peace of all.

In this respect, once more, devotion to the Sacred Heart brings a blessing to the family circle - the blessing of peace. He, Who came as the Prince of Peace to enable us to conquer our unruly passions and reestablish ourselves in the peace which our first parents lost by sin, will strengthen and encourage all those who are sincerely devout to His Sacred Heart to master their anger, selfishness, impatience, and pride. Through His aid, peace will be restored where it has been lost, and will be preserved through all the vicissitudes and vexations which are inseparable from family life.

When, in the daily difficulties and annoyances of your home, you feel moved to fly into a temper and disturb the peace of that home, cast your eyes on the image of the Sacred Heart and say a fervent prayer that our Lord may aid you this time again to conquer yourself and crush down your rising passion. When there come to you temptations to selfishness and self-seeking which, yielded to, would vex others and so again disturb the family peace, lift your eyes again to that holy image and ask your Saviour for strength to be as unselfish for His love as He has been for yours.

Your devotion to the Sacred Heart will be for you a continual reminder and incentive to avoid those things which disturb the family peace. The other members of the family will be edified by your good example and strengthened to resist in their turn what makes for disturbance and conflict. Under the protection of the Sacred Heart, Christian peace will abide in and bless your home.

The Sacred Heart, Remedy of Our Indifference

Our Blessed Saviour, the great physician of souls, has given us in these latter days the devotion to His Sacred Heart as a mighty remedy for a mighty evil. A cold indifference to spiritual and supernatural things is the characteristic of our day, and it infects even good Catholics at times with its virus. It is the fashion to affect to be broad-minded about religion, to look on all decent religions as good, to consider religious practice as a purely personal matter, like the color of one's clothes or the shape of one's hat. The passionate interest in religious questions and controversies, which was a characteristic of simpler times, has given place to a tolerance and indifference which really indicate complete carelessness about religion. "One religion is as good as another" is on the lips of many; but in their hearts is the corollary of that saying, "and no religion is good for very much."

This cold carelessness about religious truth and practice is a deep insult to Almighty God and must bring upon the world His wrath and punishment. Because religion is our service to God and because we were created precisely to serve Him, it follows that religion is the most important thing in the world and the one subject with which every reasonable being is intimately concerned. Just as a false religion is, therefore, an enormous evil, because it is either the serving of a false god or of the true God in a manner displeasing to Him, so the true religion is a supreme blessing, because it is the way of accomplishing the single purpose for which we all were made.

Yet, it is hard to convince men of today by mere processes of reasoning, of the importance of religious belief and practice, and of the wickedness of religious indifference. "Life makes many demands upon us," they will say, "the world is a very interesting place to live in. One's energies are pretty well exhausted in the mere effort to live. As to the future life, it doesn't interest us now. We are too busy trying to get our share of this earth to give much thought to heaven." The earth, close, alluring, various, reaches out many hands to hold their hearts. Spiritual things, religious truths, the claims of

God and of their own soul, seem vague, unsubstantial, even unreal, when compared with the insistent, tangible, immediate cares, interests, and pleasures of this world.

Thus all religions, save the true Faith of Christ, are losing their hold on their followers. And, alas, many Catholics, also, infected with the prevalent sickness of indifference, forget God and leave the practice of their holy Faith. Others, still, feel their piety grow cold. The sight of the crucifix, the thought of a Godman dying for their sins, ceases to move them. They can pass by the churches where, in the narrow prison of His tabernacle, that God waits for their gratitude and love, and never turn aside to visit Him for a moment, to thank, adore, believe in, and love Him. It is not enough for them that the eternal Love has come upon earth to seek their hearts, has lived, suffered, died in agony on a shameful cross for their sake, and lives the hidden life of the Blessed Sacrament to be their food and healing. They still can forget and go on in their ways of indifference and sin.

Against this cruel indifference, our Lord used a remedy of Divine wisdom and efficacy which proves to us to what lengths His compassion will go to win our indifferent hearts. In the dim chapel of the Visitation, at Paray-le-Monial, to the chosen apostle of His Sacred Heart, Saint Margaret Mary, He revealed the longing of His Heart for our love and the pain which our indifference inflicts upon Him. "Behold this Heart," He says to her and through her to us all, "which has so loved men as to spend itself and empty itself for their love, and which is so little loved in return."

All down the listening years this whispered revelation of the pain of the Sacred Heart at our indifference, of the longing of the Sacred Heart for our love, shall echo in the hearts of men, rousing them from their awful torpor of indifference and ingratitude. If the thought that a God has become man for them and died on the cross for their salvation is not enough to move them to remember and repent, at least the words of the Sacred Heart, complaining of their indifference and pleading for their love, will arouse them to love and sorrow.

Religious indifference must surely be conquered by the right knowledge of devotion to the Sacred Heart. The sight of the crucifix itself should be enough to melt a heart of stone and to banish

forever from the souls of those who believe, that icy ingratitude toward God. For ages the patient figure of Christ has hung upon His cross, His hands extended wide in invitation and welcome, and for ages countless repentant sinners, ashamed at last of their indifference and ingratitude, have rushed into that merciful embrace.

But now, to that age-long gesture of invitation and welcome our Blessed Saviour has added yet another. He has opened the wound in His side and has pointed to the flaming furnace of His Heart, at once the instrument and symbol of an endless and unrequited love for us. The moving wistfulness of that appeal, summing up as it does all the unfathomable tenderness and mercies of the Sacred Heart in our regard, is irresistible. To be indifferent to religion as such, to be cold and neglectful of our own true faith, is impossible to a right mind and generous heart that has realized the appeal of the Sacred Heart of Christ. "Behold this Heart," He says to every one, "symbol and instrument of the love that made Me die for you, and which you have so neglected and wounded in return." With what a rush of interest, earnestness, contrition, and gratitude, our own heart will answer, breaking the cold chains of indifference with which perhaps the world and the flesh have fettered it too long: "My Lord and my God! Take from me in return the offering of my entire and devoted heart!"

The Sacred Heart and Mercy for the Poor

Pity and compassion for all the sufferings of humanity - how these noble emotions burned and still flame forever in the Sacred Heart of Jesus! During His lifetime, our blessed Lord lived with the poor, preached to the poor, cheered their sorrows by His tenderness, healed their diseases, and brought them relief, encouraging all those who wished to be His followers to be kind and compassionate to the poor.

When the disciples of John the Baptist, who was in prison, came from him to Jesus to ask, "Art Thou He that art to come, or look we for another?" the gospel tells us, "And Jesus making answer said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:4-5). In His description of the last judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Saint Matthew, our Lord takes occasion of this most solemn and tremendous episode in human history, this culmination of the whole life of man on earth, to preach a startling sermon on mercies to the poor.

For when He foretells the words which He, as judge, will say to the blessed, we hear Him bidding them enter the kingdom of His Father because of the acts of corporal mercy done to others. He enumerates the giving of food to the hungry, of drink to the thirsty, of clothes to the naked, the ministering to the sick, the welcoming of strangers, the visiting of those in prison. And with similar significance, when He rebukes the wicked for their misdeeds, He enumerates their refusals to perform these same corporal works of mercy, declaring in each instance that whatever they have done or left undone to the least of His brethren, they have given or refused to the Son of Man Himself.

Thus, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has manifested unmistakably how tender is His compassion for the poor, how great His desire that we should all minister to their necessities. Our Lord takes as done to Himself whatever we do to the least and poorest of His afflicted brethren. He desires us to show our love for Him and our gratitude

to His Sacred Heart by our kindness, helpfulness, and tenderness toward the poor. The Catholic family, therefore, which is consecrated to the Sacred Heart and has enthroned that adorable Heart in its home should practice special compassion and tenderness toward the poor. The members of the family should search their hearts to discover whether they have, and exercise real, active compassion and charity to those who are in need or in affliction.

It is quite possible that even an otherwise good family may be a selfish family, keeping peace in the household, supplying generously all the members of the family with everything they need, but careless and forgetful of the duty of helpfulness and kindness toward the poor. A family may suffer from the vice of selfishness just as may an individual, and to the one as to the other the results are very damaging. "Charity," says the old proverb, "begins at home." The very comfort, plenty, and peace with which God may have blessed our own home ought to make us doubly compassionate of those other homes, where neither plenty nor peace can dwell because of grinding poverty.

Our Lord has blessed poverty and consecrated it by His own example. He has praised the poor in spirit, who are detached from the goods of this world, but He never has approved nor intended that grinding destitution which weighs intolerably both on the body and the spirit. He wishes us so to relieve the needs of others, that all may have sufficient material goods to enable them to lead decent Catholic lives. If we are true to the example of His Sacred Heart, we shall so pity the necessities of others that all the members of the family will do something for the poor.

It is this compassion of the heart, this inward sympathy and pity for others, that we ought to pray for and seek in the Sacred Heart of Jesus where it exists as in its fountainhead to a sublime and most perfect degree. If our heart is compassionate and pitiful as was the Heart of Jesus, our actions will be like His and we shall go about doing good to the poor as He did, in our own way, and according to our own opportunities, leading a Christlike life of mercy, comforting those about us, relieving distresses, and helping the poor.

What is the attitude of your family toward pity for the poor? Does each member give an example to the others of inward pity and outward helpfulness for those who are distressed and in want, outside the family circle? Does the talk of the family sometimes turn on the necessities of the poor? Are a part of the family plans, the family resources taken up with the work of real effective charity? Does a Christlike compassion for the afflicted make a part of the atmosphere of the home, enter into the home thoughts, conversations, and activities? If so, then such a home is worthy of its consecration to the Sacred Heart. It is a home where Jesus loves to dwell, a home where Christlike lives are fostered.

Nor is this pity and helpfulness, so dear to the Sacred Heart, to be given only to those who are destitute of material goods. Jesus, our model, pitied all who were in distress - the sorrowful, the sinner, the lonely stranger, the ill of body, and the perturbed of mind. So should our compassion and mercy go out from the safe haven of our home to all who are in affliction and distress. Especially ought we to commiserate and help our needy neighbors whose nearness to our dwelling makes them especially the objects of our friendly pity, given to us by God's Providence and affording precious opportunities of service to the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart and the Charity of the Home

All the true charity of the world has found its fountainhead in the Heart of Christ. Before the Son of God became Man, pity and compassion for the poor, the sick, the afflicted, as we know it today, did not exist in the world. Our Lord Himself said that He had come to teach men a new commandment - to love one another, that as He loved them, so also they might love one another. By this, He declares, are all men to know His disciples, because of the love they have one for another. Hence, charity is the characteristic virtue of the Christian home as it is also of the individual followers of our Lord.

"Little children love one another." These words so brief and so beautiful, so touching and full of significance, so full of music and of tenderness, should be the motto which guides the conversation, the conduct, and the attitude toward one another, of all the dwellers in a Catholic home. When our Lord addresses us as little children, these words are an expression of great endearment. They come, warm with love, from the pure depths of His Divine Heart. He loves us. He loves us all and with what an intense, personal, devoted, and unselfish love. He loves each one of us for our self, because we are the living image of His Father, and He loves us for His Father's sake, whose living image we are. Looking at one another, we see the dearly beloved of Christ, the friends of His Sacred Heart, His brothers and sisters - the "Little Children" for whose love He has lived, suffered, taught, established His Church, given the sacraments, and died on the cross.

His Sacred Heart bids us to love one another. It is the second of those two great commandments in which He has summed up all religion, the law, and the prophets. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like to it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:30-31).

It is natural for members of the family to love one another, unnatural for them to be unkind, cruel, and cold in their own family circle. Even the pagans cherish their own. But the teachings of the Sacred Heart have raised family love to a new level and a new dignity. When He made matrimony a sacrament, He sealed with His own Sacred Blood that contract between husband and wife which is the foundation of the home. He also sanctified by His blessed teaching and His holy grace the family love which is the natural bond of union in the home.

Our love for one another should be like the love of the Heart of Christ for us. "As I have loved you, so do you also love one another." Such a love is constant; it is universal. It does not depend on merit, nor favors received, nor the whim of the moment, nor personal preference, but it can be counted on, even when we are provoked, to give us patience. Even when we are imposed upon, it will give us kindness; even when things go wrong and we might be excused for being a little harsh, it will keep us in peace.

There is no great credit for being kind and loving at home, when everything goes right, when nobody crosses us, when our interests are not in conflict with the interests of others. But when something occurs which is really vexing, then our love for the Sacred Heart and our wish to imitate His love for others should keep us in peace. There is some credit and merit in being loving when it is hard to love and easy to be uncharitable.

Families in which the life of the household runs merely along natural lines, so that the brothers and sisters, father and mother are kind when they feel kind, cross when they feel cross, yield freely to their likes and dislikes, and are generous only because they expect to get something in return - such families can hardly be said to imitate the charity of the Sacred Heart. Our Lord, Himself, has said, "lor if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this?" (Matthew 5:46-47). To imitate Christ we must do more than the heathens do; we must be kind when others are unkind to us, obliging when others are disobliging, patient when others are harsh, forgiving when others annoy us.

Therefore, it is the way the members of the family act under provocation and vexation, or when their personal interests are disregarded, or when they have to make some sacrifice that really shows whether the charity of the Sacred Heart rules in that home. If it does, then such little opportunities as occur so often in family life, for bearing with each other's faults, for giving up to each other and forgiving small vexations, will be seized on with alacrity and profited by habitually.

It would seem that this commandment of our Lord, "Little children love one another," is sometimes woefully disregarded or misunderstood, even by very good and well-meaning people, who wish to be followers of Christ in the true sense of the word. They sometimes fail to realize that Christ has given a two-fold commandment, of the love of the neighbor as well as the love of God. The love of God they earnestly desire to practice. From the love of their neighbor, they quietly dispense themselves, when it becomes difficult or inconvenient.

These two commandments are really one. It is one charity in union with the Sacred Heart to love God for His own sake and our neighbor for the love of God. Saint John, the beloved disciple, inquires pointedly how men can love God whom they do not see, when they fail to love men whom they see. We may change this inquiry about a little and make it fit our present purpose. The statue and the image of the Sacred Heart are in our homes as a continual reminder of the love of our Lord for us all and of His desire that we should love one another. In sight of the image of the Sacred Heart our family life goes on with its joys and sorrows, its vexations and consolations, its little rubs and its opportunities for patience and kindness in little things. How can we say that we truly love our Lord's Sacred Heart, as He desires to be loved, if we do not carry out in daily practice His tender exhortations to love one another?

The Sacred Heart and Loyalty to the Church

Those who are truly devoted to the Heart of our Divine Lord seek to imitate that perfect Heart in affections, in desires, and in friendships, so as to make their own heart as like as possible to the Heart of their Divine Friend. This is really a condition of the true love of the Sacred Heart - that we desire what Christ desires, love what He loves, and disapprove of and resist whatever is offensive to Him. Friendship with the God-man, to be real and genuine, requires the whole being. Our Lord, Himself, warns us of this, for on one occasion He told His apostles and disciples: "He that is not with Me, is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth" (Matthew 12:30). At another time He declared to them: "He that is not against Me is with Me."

Thus, everyone has to take sides with or against Christ, and those who do not take sides with Him are not His friends. Too many of those who claim the name of Catholic seem to hope to be able to serve two masters, God and mammon. Here again, our Blessed Lord has warned us solemnly that such a double service cannot be maintained. "No man," He Says, "can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). We must sacrifice our own preferences at times and must give up our personal interests and material gain to be true followers of Christ.

One of the great desires of the Sacred Heart of our Lord is that we should love His Church and be loyal to her and to those who rule over her. The Church is the spouse of Christ, spotless and immortal, and He loves her both for her own beauty and holiness and because it is the will of His Heavenly Father that He should cherish her as His own. Indeed, the holy sacrament of marriage is a symbol and a figure of the union which exists between Christ and the Church.

Then, too, the Church is the mystical body of Christ, of which He is the Head. He is joined to the Church as the head is joined to the

body, and all who are members of the Church are one with Him through the marvelous bonds of sanctifying grace. Thus, the Sacred Heart of Jesus cherishes and loves the Church as part of Himself, given to Him by His heavenly Father. It is impossible for us to imagine or to conceive of the immense and profound love and devotion which flames in the Heart of Christ for His Holy Church.

We, who are devoted to the Sacred Heart, must imitate Him in this love and loyalty to the Holy Church. In thought, word, and deed, we must be her faithful servants, consecrated to her service, brave in her defense, loyal to her interests, and steadfast to her principles. We should think with the Church, work for her, pray for her, defend her in our own heart, in our own mind, and in outward speech, remembering always that Christ died to bring her into being, that she sprang from His wounded side, and was born in His Sacred Heart. We cannot love Him truly, unless we also love and cherish His Holy Church.

There are three great divisions of the Church: the society of the faithful on earth, who form the church militant; that of the souls in purgatory, who form the church suffering; and the glorious assemblage of the blessed in heaven, who form the church triumphant. All these great groups of His beloved followers are most dear to the Heart of our Lord. To the church militant we owe obedience, loyalty, and faithful service. We have become members of this Church by baptism, a most blessed privilege and one which makes us children of God and heirs of heaven. From the Church we receive the holy ministrations of the sacraments. Through her we are enabled to assist at Holy Mass and to receive Holy Communion. She instructs us, she guides us, she warns us against evil, and encourages us to do good. What a great blessing, an ineffable fayor of the Heart of Christ to be a member of His true Church - one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Out of loyalty to our Lord, no less than from regard for our salvation and sanctification, we should try to be really good Catholics, and worthy members of the Holy Church.

It is the individual members of the Church who determine, by their own fidelity to her principles and by the consistently Catholic lives they lead, the degree of Christ-likeness which the Church presents to the world. Everyone who is a member of the Church must either

help or hinder the esteem in which she is held among mankind. To be a really good Catholic is to raise by just so much the sum total of praise, service, and love which the Church pays to our Lord and to console by just so much the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the other hand, to be an indifferent or a bad Catholic is a grave injury to the honor of the Church, a deep grief to the Heart of Christ, and a disloyalty to that Divine Heart. Such thoughts as those ought to make us desirous, for the love of the Sacred Heart, to be good Catholics.

By reason of the communion of saints, we can also bring consolation and deliverance to the suffering souls in purgatory. This part of His Church also must be most dear to the Sacred Heart of our Lord. The poor souls have been His faithful servants on earth, they have died in His friendship, and they are destined to everlasting happiness with Him in heaven. But alas, they are not worthy yet to enter the mansions of His glory. First, the stains which sin has left upon their souls must be cleansed away, for nothing defiled can enter heaven.

It is a blessed solace, therefore, to the Heart of Christ, to pray and offer up our good works and sufferings for the poor souls in purgatory. This is a pious service we so often forget. Is it want of realizing faith that makes us neglect to pray for the poor souls, when we know their great need, their pitiful suffering, and how easy it is for us to deliver them? The Heart of Christ yearns over them, but His justice will not release them unless we make use of the means He has provided, or unless they pay the slow penalty of suffering in purgatory.

Then there are the glorious and triumphant hosts of the blessed in heaven, led by our Lord Himself and His holy Mother, the multitudes whom no man can number, of all tribes and tongues and ages and places, who have been washed in the blood of the lamb and who enjoy the endless and tranquil delights of eternity. These are the dear friends of the Sacred Heart and, He wishes us to reverence them, to love them, to pray to them, and to imitate their virtues. The honor which the Church pays to the blessed in heaven is most dear to the Heart of our Lord. It is for His sake that we reverence His friends, for His sake that we give them glory. Do you

love the saints as Christ desires? Are you interested in them, desirous of reading their lives, of pondering on their words and actions? Do you give them due honor, whom the Sacred Heart delights to honor? This also is a part of our service to that most loving Heart.

Thus, all the three great divisions of the Church offer to us a field of loyalty and service to the Sacred Heart of incomparable value. By doing our part, our little part, we shall please Him and console Him for the neglect and outrages of mankind. Soon, very soon, the Church militant and the Church suffering will both be gathered into the Church triumphant. Only for a little while do our present opportunities remain for gaining merit by our willing and loving service and loyalty to the Church, for love of the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart and Catholic Unity

The Divine Heart of Jesus burns with a love which is universal, in that it extends to all mankind, and yet most personal in that He loves each one of us individually and specially, with a personal tenderness and friendship which is all our own. He desires each one of us to be His friend. He gives us everything that is necessary to serve Him faithfully. He wishes each one of us to take our part in, and to do our individual share of, the great work of His Church. He intends that we shall each participate through our willing, loving service in the great sum-total of harmonious effort which each generation needs, to carry on His kingdom. He desires that we shall all be worthy members of His mystical body, the Catholic Church, of which He is truly the Head.

Now, the great bond of union which holds the Church together is the love of Jesus Christ. Because we believe in Him, hope in Him, and love Him, we are Catholic. The love of the Sacred Heart for us is the reason of the Church's existence. Our own love for the Sacred Heart is the reason why we remain faithful members of the Church. In order to be good Catholics, we have to make many sacrifices to overcome many evil inclinations. All the bad instincts in us, which would separate us from the love and service of Christ, have to be conquered and subdued if we are to be good Catholics. Pride and covetousness, lust and anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth have to be brought under subjection for the love of Christ.

Our Lord has told us this in very plain terms. "If any man will come after me," He said to His disciples after He had predicted to them His passion and death, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For he that will save his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it" (Matthew 16:24-25).

Our Lord then went on to utter that tremendous Saying, which rings in the ears of the world forever: "For what doth it profit a man," He says, "if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

The more we love our Lord and the more we appreciate the love of

His Sacred Heart for us, the more we shall be willing to make sacrifices for Him and for His interests. He has proved His own love for us by giving up His life for us. Our love for Him may be measured very accurately by our willingness to make sacrifices for His sake.

Now, one of the first requirements for unity in Catholic enterprises and Catholic organizations is this spirit of self-sacrifice. Where many people work together, it is inevitable that there should be clashes of interests and differences of opinion. "Many men, many minds," says the old proverb. So to have unity, some must yield, some must sacrifice their wishes, interests, plans, and prejudices. If everyone is insistent on his or her own will, own rights, own privileges, there will be splits, factions, divisions; in a word, there will be a pitiful absence of unity.

It is difficult to find any motive strong enough to keep a permanent unity in Catholic organizations, save real love and loyalty to the interests of the Sacred Heart. Catholics are united in their faith, hope, and love in Christ and this is the one great bond of union. They differ in everything else - in nationality, in riches, education, position in society, and occupation; in a word, in everything except that they are loyal in faith, hope, love to the Sacred Heart. Hence, the more this love increases, the deeper and truer and stronger it becomes, the more our Catholic organizations will prosper. We must all depend for perseverance in good works upon the grace which flows from the Sacred Heart. So, also, the strongest bond of union, the surest guarantee of perseverance in good works is the love which is enkindled by the Sacred Heart.

Officers and directors of Catholic organizations, whether they be parish societies, or national, or even international in their scope, will do well to remember always and to utilize the mighty motive of love of the Sacred Heart, to secure self-sacrificing leaders for their enterprises, and to encourage devoted and persevering effort on the part of members of Catholic organizations. The difficulties of Catholic organization are great, just as the need of it is most urgent. Indeed, the very circumstances which nowadays make it difficult are also making it more necessary. The distraction of the times, the multiplication of other activities, the fact that our Catholic people

are so mingled with the non-Catholic population, the competition of secular organizations - all these things make it more and more difficult to keep up good Catholic societies and they are, also, the reasons why it is so necessary to do so. No motive is powerful enough to overcome this difficulty effectively, save only the love of the Sacred Heart. No help is strong enough to do so, save the grace of the Sacred Heart.

Thus, when the question arises in the minds of those who are working and sacrificing themselves for a Catholic organization, "Why should I vex myself with so much voluntary effort and take so much trouble on my shoulders when I could lead a quiet, peaceful life by merely tending to my own affairs?" let them answer, "Because I love the Sacred Heart and am willing to suffer for the promotion of Its interest," and this will be reason enough. Or again, when the temptation comes to keep up a dispute or widen a division in a Catholic society for merely personal reasons, and the thought comes to any one's mind, "Why should I give up my way and sink my preferences in this matter?" The answer will rise from a heart truly devoted to Christ, "I will do it for the love of our Lord and because He wishes union and charity in all who serve His Sacred Heart." Such a motive truly realized is mighty enough to overcome all the obstacles to union and divert all the divisions and difficulties which so often injure and wreck Catholic organizations.

The Sacred Heart and Respect for Priests

It might seem that those who have a true reverence for the priesthood would likewise have a great respect for individual priests and, indeed, if human nature were perfectly logical, this would always be so. Every priest, however humble or insignificant he may be personally, bears with him the powers and the dignity of the priesthood which Christ has given him in the sacrament of Holy Orders. Whoever, therefore, reverences the priesthood must respect the priest in his character of the ambassador of Christ. The Sacred Heart of Jesus desires that we should recognize in all priests His personal representatives and respect them for His sake, apart from their own personal claims to reverence.

Unfortunately, however, there are some followers of Christ who are not logical enough in their practical reflections to convince themselves that all priests should be honored and respected for the sake of Christ. They sometimes allow themselves to criticize and speak ill of members of the clergy, to ridicule their human shortcomings, to cooperate with those priests whom they like, but to remain indifferent to those other priests whom they find not so congenial and whose natural characters are not so appealing.

Our attitude in our dealings with the priests of God depends on whether we act from faith and right reason or from human feeling or sentiment. Faith and reason tell us that we should disregard as far as possible the defects and shortcomings of the poor, weak, human individual on whom Christ has placed the immense burden of the priesthood and should rather consider the character he has received by ordination, that of the personal representative of our Saviour. Every priest is merely a human being and every human being has faults and shortcomings, some of which are ingrained in his nature. No one of us has ever succeeded in overcoming all his defects. Out of the whole human race, we know of only two entirely perfect characters. One of these is our Lord Himself and the other is His Blessed Mother. No wonder, then, that even priests, who are consecrated to God in so solemn a manner, still retain many human imperfections. They ought indeed to become as holy as they can, but those who deal with them should try to overlook their

shortcomings and think rather of Him Whom they represent.

The great majority of priests lead a holy and edifying life, worthy of their sublime mission. It is a great argument for the truth of the Catholic Church that Christ works in her, generation after generation, this moral miracle, that so many hundreds of thousands of young men, with all the passions, the ambitions, and the dreams which belong to youth, leave all things to follow Christ and to become His ambassadors to His people. If now and then, some one of this great multitude should fall from his high resolve, it is only reasonable to have pity and compassion for his misfortune and to redouble our prayers for the great army of priests throughout the world, that they may continue to have strength and courage to carry out their more than human mission.

Indeed, the Sacred Heart of our Lord is greatly pleased when He sees us respecting His ministers for His sake, not for their own, and disregarding any temptation we may have to criticize them and carp at their human imperfections. As Saint Francis de Sales declares with charitable truth, "If God had wished us to be angels, He would have made us angels; but He has created us men and women." He desires us to profit by each other's imperfections, in order to practice patience, and perhaps He sometimes allows even good priests to have difficult and even unpleasant characters so that the faithful may gain all the more merit by respecting them!

During the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, or during Benediction, as we kneel in adoration before our Lord, we are not very much concerned as to the cost of the monstrance or whether it is of solid gold or only gilded, or whether the gems upon it are imitation or real diamonds and pearls. We contemplate our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, we love Him and adore Him. The monstrance is precious in our eyes only because it is His shrine. Though we would like to have it as glorious and beautiful as possible, as precious and genuine as gold and gems can make it, still we adore Him with as much devotion and fervor in a poor little chapel or in a church where the monstrance is simple, plain, and insignificant, as we do in a magnificent cathedral where everything is exquisite and beautiful. Indeed, we sometimes feel more devotion in the poor little country chapel or church because there our faith

burns all the brighter for the poverty and simplicity of the surroundings.

In like manner, we ought steadfastly to contemplate Christ in the persons of His priests and not to bother ourselves because one priest has one sort of character, another priest another, any more than we trouble ourselves about the different sorts of monstrances which are used at Benediction, or the different kinds of chalices which are employed at Mass. It is for the sake of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that we reverence and help His priests, and this motive is as strong in the case of the poorly gifted and unattractive personality as in the case of those priests who are naturally lovable and popular, learned and kind. In fact, we gain all the more merit for recognizing the chosen friend of the Sacred Heart beneath unpromising appearances and when it is difficult for us to do so.

Our respect for the priest should also extend itself to active cooperation in his sublime work of saving souls. This is the one reason why Christ came on earth. He might have established all the sciences, perfected all governments, brought the whole world thousands of years forward in every material and intellectual regard; but He chose the divine task of saving and sanctifying the souls of men and it is this task which He has conferred upon His priests, that they may continue the work which He commenced. Hence, a priest's whole life is dedicated to saving and sanctifying mankind in Christ's name.

Every member of the Church is called upon to cooperate with the priest in carrying out this divine mission. The yearning of the Sacred Heart for souls ought to be a motive, for each one of us, to do all we can to cooperate with the work of the priest. He is but a man, like ourselves, in need of encouragement, in need of support, and sometimes counsel. He is not a being from another world, but like us in everything, nourished with the same food, breathing the same air, subject. to the same sorrows, cares, and wearinesses as we. We know how much we need cooperation, encouragement, and kindly help. We appreciate extremely when anyone cheers us on in our work, brings us aid, even speaks a word to us of honest appreciation and friendship. All these things are deeply helpful to the priest in his work.

There are many things which the priest cannot do himself and for which he absolutely requires the aid of the laity. This is especially true in our own time, when social conditions have made the work of the priest in some ways so much more difficult. The priest alone can say Mass and can administer the sacraments. He is the spiritual head of the parish and has the responsibility of the care of souls. But, it is the Catholic people, the lay folk, on whom he has to depend for the meeting of many other needs. The real welfare of the parish societies depends on them. The support of the parish and its activities rests on their shoulders. The distribution of Catholic literature, the sociability which is to be provided for Catholic young people, sometimes the catechetical instruction of Catholic children who are not going to the parish school, the support of the school itself - all these things belong to the sphere of the lay apostolate, a phrase which means the cooperation of the laity in the divine work of spreading the faith and saving and sanctifying souls.

If we truly love the Heart of Jesus and desire to fulfill the wishes of our Saviour, we must respect and help the priest in his mission of ministering to souls. The more we love our Lord, the greater will be our zeal and self-sacrifice in this work so needed in our day and so dear to the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart and Good Citizenship

There are too many devoted friends and followers of the Sacred Heart who wish earnestly to carry out our Lord's desires and who quite fail to realize how earnestly He has commanded us and exhorted us to be good citizens. Indeed, it may come almost as a surprise to some unrealizing souls that to be a good citizen in the real sense of the term is one of the great services which the Sacred Heart of our Lord desires from us.

This is clear both from the teachings of our Lord Himself and from the sayings of His apostles in the inspired writings of the New Testament, which is also the word of God. We all remember hearing, again and again, the episode in the Gospel when some of the Pharisees and the Herodians were sent to our Lord so that they might ensnare Him by asking Him whether it were lawful to give tribute to Cesar or whether they should refuse him. Caesar, as the head of the Roman state, stood for the civil government and there was a great dispute among the Jews as to whether it were lawful to give tribute to this heathen.

Pagan though he was, Caesar was head of the constituted government and so had authority from God. Hence, our Lord rebuked these men for tempting Him, and after asking to see the coin of the tribute, He inquired of them whose image and inscription was on the coin. They answered Him that it was Caesar's. Then He said to them: "Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." These words fixed themselves very vividly in the minds of the apostles and the disciples who heard them; Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, and Saint Luke all tell this episode in different words, but they all repeat the words of our Lord alike.

Saint Paul, the great apostle, emphasizes this same teaching in his epistle to the Romans when he says, "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation" (Romans 13:1-2). The apostle then goes on

to summarize, in verse seven of this chapter, the duties of citizenship. "Render, therefore," he says, "to all men their dues. Tribute, to whom tribute is due: custom, to whom custom: fear, to whom fear: honor, to whom honor."

Saint Peter in his first epistle emphasizes the same truth in the second chapter. "Be ye subject, therefore, to every human creature for God's sake: whether it be to the king, as excelling; or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of the good" (I Peter 2:13). And he also summarizes our duty in the seventeenth verse of this chapter. "Honor all men," he says, "Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

It is true that the conditions of good citizenship have changed very much since the time of our Lord and His apostles. In those days the monarchical form of government prevailed, and the principal duty of a citizen was obedience to the laws and the support of the state. But in our day, monarchies have disappeared for the most part and government has passed into the hands of the people. Individual citizens have much more responsibility and many more active duties of citizenship than they had in former times, but the fundamental principles of good citizenship remain the same. They consist in doing one's full part for the welfare of one's country and its government, of discharging one's duties to the full, and making one's influence felt as an individual and in civic organizations for the welfare of one's country.

One of the first duties of a good citizen is to pray earnestly and sincerely for his native land, for its rulers, and for all that have influence for its welfare. Such prayer is surely very dear to the Sacred Heart of our Lord. We ought to include in all our good works and devotions a general intention of this kind, and from time to time we ought to recall and make explicit our wish to call down God's blessing and secure His help for all the officials of our government.

The next duty of good citizenship is to take a rightful part in the activities of government. The power to vote brings with it a great responsibility. Those who deliberately neglect to exercise this duty of citizenship are surely not fulfilling the wishes of our Lord. If the sum total of responsibility for our government rests, as it does, on

the body of voters, it must rest on them as individuals. Everyone admits that neglect of the duty of voting and of voting prudently and unselfishly does great harm to our nation.

Organized and selfish interests, which can control a certain number of votes, push through measures which are sometimes very harmful to the public good. Who is responsible for this rule of the minority? Is it not the good, but lazy, people, who should have gone out to vote but did not? So, too, men who are unselfish and capable are defeated for public office and others who are incompetent or selfish are elected, simply because of the neglect of good citizenship on the part of those who fail to vote, from no better motive than selfishness, indifference, or thoughtlessness.

Out of reverence for our Lord's wishes and out of consideration for the interests of the Sacred Heart, we should all earnestly encourage each other, and be vigorous ourselves, in fulfilling our duty to vote. This means that we shall take an intelligent interest in public affairs, or at least shall take advice of some one who is able to guide us, so that our vote will not be wasted or given to the wrong person, but will contribute our share to securing for our country a good and worthy government.

On great public issues, we should try to form an intelligent opinion, or to get some one else to help us form one, so as to throw our influence on the side that is best and most just. The general interests of the country ought to have precedence over private preferences. It is God, Himself, Who has ordained human society, and He has established it for the benefit of mankind and for the accomplishment of His holy will. He leaves to us to maintain the authority of government, to support its laws, and to keep it upright and good. In the days of democracy, this can be accomplished only by each one doing his or her part as a good citizen.

The principle of democracy is becoming more and more widespread, better and better established in the world. In the days of our Lord, people never had to vote, or at least very seldom had any share in the choosing of their rulers. Monarchies were hereditary, or they were acquired by force of arms or gift, and so there was no occasion for voting. But now, all important issues are submitted to the vote. Most important officials are elected by the

people. Good citizenship requires more effort, more conscientious thought, and more self-sacrifice than it did in the early days.

In few ways can we give greater honor to God in the eyes of non-Catholics than by showing ourselves - unselfishly devoted to the interests of our country, and by being good citizens from motives of fidelity and the love of God and our neighbor. Not in the field of politics alone, but in all forms of public service, Catholics should be in the van of the battle for right, for justice, for the redress of evils, and the promotion of thoroughly good movements. Public-spirited men are rightly held in honor, when they work from a real desire of the public good and not from motives of mere selfishness and ambition. When this public service is performed for the love of God and out of a wish to do His will and to promote His interests, it becomes truly glorious. Every friend of the Sacred Heart should desire most earnestly to be a good citizen for love of his country and love of his fellowmen, and most of all for the love of the Sacred Heart.

The Sacred Heart and Ministering to the Afflicted

The compassion of the Sacred Heart for sorrow and misery of every kind found continual expression in active good works. As our Lord went about, preaching and teaching the people, He was forever healing the sick, comforting the afflicted, counseling the doubtful, forgiving the sinner, ministering to every form of human misery. He preaches to us by an example more powerful than words, teaching us that in the ordinary occupations of our everyday life we are coming constantly in contact with the very persons whom He wishes us to help and to comfort. Just as our Lord healed those who came His way, so ought we to pity and help the actual, living persons with whom Providence brings us in contact. There is no use in having a vague and general compassion for the afflicted. The great point is to do the deed of mercy when it comes our way and to seize the momentary opportunity to comfort the sorrowful, help the poor, visit the sick, welcome the stranger, and so of all the other acts of spiritual and corporal mercy.

Our Lord has told us, "The poor you have always with you," and He has encouraged us to look on every person whom we meet as another Christ, assuring us that whatever we do to the least of these His brethren, He takes as done to Himself. The circumstances of society have greatly changed since His time. The methods of relief are different. Grinding poverty is in many places less frequent, and sickness also less terrible than in His day. But the miseries of mankind still persist. They are rooted in human nature itself and will endure to the end of time.

In simpler days of old, the Catholic family, desirous of imitating the compassion of the Sacred Heart, found many easy ways of helping the poor and comforting the afflicted. People lived in neighborhoods in those days and were well known to one another. The sometimes complex organization which now is necessary in order to reach and relieve the afflicted was unthought of then. All that was required in those days was to give alms to the beggar, send food to the hungry, or clothes to those whose poverty exposed them

to the pangs of cold. But nowadays, our social organization has grown so complex that the Catholic family, devoted to the Sacred Heart and desiring to imitate the ministrations of Christ to the poor, can hardly practice charity as simply as was possible in former days. Yet, we may be quite sure that the Sacred Heart desires as earnestly of the Catholic families of this day as of the families of simpler times that they should minister to the poor. How, then, can we fulfill this loving desire?

The answer is a very easy one. Where it is possible to minister directly and personally to the needs of others or their distresses, our Lord undoubtedly wishes us to exercise this personal ministry. When friends are ill, some one of the family ought to go and visit them. When a case of need or destitution becomes known in the neighborhood, the members of the family should make some effort to help relieve this neighborhood affliction. How many kind and friendly offices there are that the people of the neighborhood can exercise toward one another. Whether it be reading to some blind person, or visiting a shut-in, or taking care of somebody's children during a family crisis of sickness or accident, or teaching some children their catechism, or making some lonely person feel at home in the neighborhood, there are a whole series of neighborhood opportunities which almost every family could find near at hand for practicing the charity befitting followers and imitators of the Sacred Heart.

Then there is the whole wide field of Catholic friendliness and sociability, the hallowed task of helping Catholic young folk who come as strangers to the parish to make Catholic acquaintances and to form safe friendships which may lead to Catholic marriages. The preciousness of such charity and its dearness to the Sacred Heart is very great in our time, because so many Catholic young people who wander across the face of the land fall into ways of infidelity and neglect for want of Catholic sociability.

Then, there are the children, the neglected Catholic children, deprived of the heritage of their faith because they have not received instruction. Out of our four million Catholic children of school age about two million are safe in the parish schools. The other half, or nearly half, are deprived of this immense blessing

and, sad to say, the very ones whose parents do not take interest enough to send them to the parish school are the ones who receive least instruction at home.

Dear to the Sacred Heart must be the work of individual zeal on the part of members of the family in looking up and instructing neglected Catholic children. The difficulty sometimes exists, of course, that city life is so individualistic, that neighborhoods are no longer neighborhoods, and people who live next door are strangers to each other. It may be, indeed, that some very charitable people find themselves unable to practice individual good works in imitation of the Sacred Heart. But for these also Providence has opened a way in Catholic organizations. We must defer to another chapter some thoughts on this great opportunity offered to those families whose members desire to imitate the charity of the Heart of Christ in their active good works for their neighbor.

The Sacred Heart and Catholic Organizations

The Sacred Heart of our Lord is a fountain of endless love for God and man. This pure love is the master motive of the life of Christ, the explanation of His life and His teachings. Charity means love, and all active good works, if they are truly Christian, must have love for their motive - love of God for His own sake and of men for the sake of God. Hence, all Catholic activities, if they are worthy of the name, must spring from the love of the Sacred Heart, that source of all true kindness, serviceableness, and helpful ministry to others.

Our blessed Lord first gave us an example of individual good works. He went about doing good, exercising the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, teaching the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, healing the sick, bearing wrongs patiently, and praying for the living and the dead. But at the same time, our Lord gives us also a great example of the power of organization. Even He, the infinite God become man, did not choose to do everything Himself nor to remain on earth indefinitely. It was His Father's will to establish a human society, the Catholic Church, that is, the assemblage of the faithful organized into a great religious society which should endure to the end of time and be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic in all ages.

To establish this organization Christ chose the twelve apostles, instructed and trained them, made them rulers of His Church, gave them immense powers, and authorized them to appoint successors in authority until the end of time. Through this Church, Christ continues to live and work in the world. It is the greatest, most perfect, and most successful of all human organizations. The love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for mankind has been the motive of this sublime organization, our Holy Mother, the Church, the daughter and the spouse of Christ.

The purpose of the Church is to save and sanctify the souls of men, but the example of our Lord has encouraged His followers to use the

same principles of organization for many other excellent purposes. Catholic societies have existed in all the ages of the Church to promote charity, to help the poor, to bury the dead, to nurse the sick, to care for widows and orphans - to exercise, in a word, all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These Catholic societies have taken different forms in different ages. The organization of the faithful in apostolic times must have been very excellent and perfect. "For neither was there any one needy among them. For as many as were owners of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles. And distribution was made to every one, according as he had need" (Acts 4:34-35).

Indeed, so great was the burden of thus helping the poor, that the twelve apostles demanded of the faithful that seven deacons should be chosen whom they might "appoint over this business." As time went on, other forms of organization arose; as for example, the guilds of the middle ages, the sodalities, and other societies of more modern times. The Church, like a kind mother, allowed her children to group themselves together in the form which best suited them, providing always, of course, that everything was carried on in a manner conformable to the wishes of the Sacred Heart, and to the interests of the Church and of souls.

There was never another time, perhaps, in the history of the Church when the variety of Catholic organizations was so great as it is today. Every member of a Catholic family who is devoted to the interests of the Sacred Heart can find some means of promoting those interests by faithful and active membership in a Catholic organization. For some, one society has an appeal; for others, another; but there is hardly anyone who will not find some good work organized and at hand, to satisfy his or her desire.

It is important for us all to realize that faithful membership in these Catholic societies is very pleasing to the Sacred Heart and that each member of the family consecrated to the Heart of our Lord ought to show a reasonable zeal toward Catholic organizations. This is surely the providential means by which our Lord designs to aid His followers, to meet the needs of the time; and, though these societies cannot work miracles nor perform wonders, still their steadfast and

faithful cooperation will do much to help the work of the Church in saving souls.

It is a good and worthy thing to encourage the members of your family to take due pride in Catholic organizations, to belong to the right societies, and to cooperate in their activities. Every member of the family should take a special interest in what the others are doing for Catholic organizations. A little encouragement at home and a little real appreciation from the family circle often help a great deal to keep the officers and members of Catholic societies courageous and faithful in their work. If we truly love the Sacred Heart, we shall be devoted to all that promotes the interests of the kingdom of Christ on earth. It must follow, then, that we shall esteem and love in our family circle the Catholic organizations which Christ holds so dear.

The Sacred Heart and Reverence for the Priesthood

The immense and unending love of the Sacred Heart is not limited to the men and women of any time or place, but extends to the whole world and to all ages. Our blessed Lord desired eagerly to bless, to heal, and to save all generations, as He did those happy fellow countrymen of His among whom He walked during His mortal life in Palestine. He wore Himself out, during the days of His active life, walking from place to place to instruct the people, to heal the sick, to comfort the afflicted, to convert and forgive sinners. Then, during the night, when the world was asleep, He would spend long hours in prayer, pleading with His heavenly Father with all the fervor of His Sacred Heart for all mankind, His world-wide family, those brothers and sisters of His human nature whom He held so dear.

But it was the will of God the Father that Christ should remain on earth only a few years. In the prime of His manhood, with the desire of His Sacred Heart still unsatisfied, that all men should hear the message of salvation, He meekly ceased from His labors, carried His cross to Calvary, lay down in holy obedience upon that most disgraceful gibbet, and offered up the agonizing sacrifice of His life for our salvation.

Yet, before He died for us on the cross, He had chosen and taught His twelve apostles, who, with His other disciples, were to be other Christs and to continue for Him the work of saving and sanctifying souls, so dear to the Sacred Heart. Before He ascended into heaven, He had completed His instructions, had prepared His ambassadors for their holy ministry, had given to the apostles and their successors, bishops of His Church, the power to ordain priests until the end of time, and had committed to the priesthood the tremendous ministry of carrying on the work of Christ, age after age, generation after generation, until the very consummation of days.

Though our Lord, in His visible presence, has long since left this

earth, though we can no longer see His beautiful countenance, nor hear His dear voice, melodious with the accents of His divine love, we still have Christ with us - Christ ministering to us, Christ teaching us His holy doctrine, forgiving us our sins in the sacrament of penance, feeding our souls with His Sacred Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, washing us clean of original sin in baptism. In the person of His priests, we see Jesus offering up for us, day by day, on a hundred thousand altars, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, anointing the brows of the dying with the holy unction of strength and of healing, pouring forth on all the world the treasures of His Sacred Heart.

The priest, as has been often said, is the ambassador of Christ and bears with him the power of Him Who sent him. It is in the name of Christ that the priest exercises his august mission. Thus, our Lord has multiplied His presence many hundreds of thousands of times in the person of His priests, as He has multiplied His hidden presence innumerable times in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. In the Blessed Eucharist, it is Christ Himself Who is really present, living and entire, beneath the sacramental veils. In the priest, He is present by the power which He has given these men through ordination to speak for Him and to act for Him in the tremendous ministry of the sacraments. When the priest speaks in the name of Christ, to forgive a sinner, to consecrate the bread and wine during Mass, to anoint the dying, God the Father in heaven sees in these solemn rites His own divine Son, acting through His ministers, and moved by that sight He pours down graces upon those whom Christ thus helps by the consecrated hands of His priests.

Indeed, the Sacred Heart of Jesus does many things through His priests which He does not choose to do in His own real presence on the altar. In the Blessed Sacrament, He remains hidden and silent; but in the person of His priests, He carries on innumerable visible ministrations to countless human beings. As these lines are written, and at the moment when you shall read them, hundreds of thousands of priests throughout the entire world are busy ministering to the people in the name of Christ. Somewhere on earth at this instant the sun has but lately risen and is filling the world with the light of early morning. There, on many altars, Christ's priests are offering up in His name the Holy Sacrifice, and

are laying on the lips of the people the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. As our great world revolves beneath the sun, His light falls upon multitudes of priests, other Christs, carrying into the whole world the power and love of the Sacred Heart. They are pouring on the brows of children the waters of salvation; they are witnessing, in the name of the Church, the solemn and holy contract which is the sacrament of matrimony, sealed by Christ's blood; they are preaching, teaching, visiting the sick, comforting the afflicted, directing good works, and anointing the dying. In a word, they are doing what Christ desires to accomplish through their ministry, out of the love of His Sacred Heart.

If we ourselves have a true love of that Sacred Heart and desire to cherish what our Lord cherishes, to esteem what He esteems, we shall have an immense appreciation of the holy priesthood and we shall pray for the priests, as He desires us to do. We shall cooperate with their efforts, assist them over their weaknesses, and give them the means of carrying on their ministry. When any youth who is dear to us shows signs of vocation for the priesthood, we shall rejoice with the Sacred Heart and try to help and encourage him worthily to enter on and persevere in this Christlike calling. We shall pray for priestly vocations, offering up our thoughts, words, and actions that our Lord may send worthy laborers into His vineyard.

How grateful we ought to be to the Heart of our Lord for giving to priests such stupendous powers, for enabling men to forgive sins, to call down from heaven our divine Lord, Himself, Who at their words in the consecration of the Mass changes the bread and wine into His body and blood. How we ought to thank that loving Heart for giving to so many young men the wonderful grace of priestly vocation, that grace which enables them to leave home and family, to give up the consolations of domestic life, and to devote their whole lives to acting as Christ's agents and representatives, leading an existence like that of the angels who minister about the throne of God.

How grateful we should be that the Sacred Heart of our Lord has filled the whole world with these priestly ministrations, so that wherever we go in this or in other lands, we shall always find

waiting for us, in the great cities and in smaller places, these ambassadors of Christ, seated in the confessional, standing at the altar, ready at any moment of the day or night to rise even from sleep and come to us in case of grievous accident or deathly illness, to anoint us with the oil of salvation, to feed us with Christ's body and blood.

Our esteem for the priesthood, our prayer for priestly vocations, our habit of interceding for priests - these things are a measure of our love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. With the eyes of faith we can see our blessed Lord walking through the world today as He walked through Palestine in times of old. Nay, He does much more for us than He did for the Jews. Never, in all His earthly pilgrimage did He offer up the Sacrifice of the Mass or give Holy Communion save at the Last Supper, the night before His death. Yet these sublime, astounding favors He grants us daily, if we will, by the hands of His priests. All the tenderness of our heart, its gratitude and love are all too little to render back to the Sacred Heart of Jesus even a part of what we owe for this sublime and heavenly ministry which He sends to us by the hands of His priests.

The Sacred Heart and Religious Vocations

To love our Lord truly demands that we sympathize with the desires of His Sacred Heart and make His wishes and His aims our own. This is required for all true friendship, that there shall be a sympathy and understanding and a harmony with the aspirations and desires of one's friends. Our Lord is infinitely worthy of our most devoted and loyal friendship, and so we ought to make His desires our own. His Heart is the most loving of hearts and all that He desires is most excellent and beautiful.

One of the dearest wishes of the Heart of our Lord is this, that vocations to the religious life and the priesthood should be greatly esteemed and faithfully followed. He wishes that they should be esteemed by all of His followers without distinction and He desires that they should be followed by those who have received the Divine call.

Vocations to the priesthood and the religious life are of the utmost importance to the Church and are an important part of the plan which our Lord has formed for the carrying on of His work for souls. The priesthood is absolutely necessary for the life of the Church, so that we are sure that in every age some Catholic young men will volunteer for this high service. Still, the life and vigor, the fervor and the progress of the Church depend in great measure on the number and fervor of the priests who represent our Lord among His chosen faithful. Hence, He Himself tells us that the field is white for the harvest and bids us pray that God may send His laborers into the harvest.

The religious life is not essential to the existence of the Church, but it is most important for her progress and for the sanctification of souls. Think what the Church in the United States would be today without her missionaries, who have been the pioneers of religion and civilization on our continent. Think what we would do without the religious teachers in our Catholic schools, the Sisters, Brothers, and priests who are educating 2,000,000 children and young people. Reflect on the prayer of the contemplative orders in the Church and the work and prayer of the active communities. How

many blessings they bring upon society and the Church. All this work and prayer is exceedingly dear to the Heart of our Lord. He desires ardently that more and more priestly and religious vocations should be developed and followed in His Church.

Then, too, the priest and the religious are the closest followers and imitators of our Lord and give Him the most honor and service; and for this reason, also, vocations are dear to the Sacred Heart. The priest is the personal representative of Christ, His ambassador. Through him Christ ministers to the people. The more good priests there are in the Church, the more the activities of our Lord are multiplied, the easier it is for the people to receive the sacraments, to assist at Mass, and to hear the word of God. The priestly office and the priestly vocation spring from the Heart of our Lord and are sealed with His Precious Blood. Dear indeed should they be, therefore, to every friend of His Sacred Heart.

In the religious life Christ, our Lord, is most honored, for religious, both men and women, make it the work and profession of their life to imitate and follow Christ most perfectly. The three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are taken according to the counsels of our Lord, and their purpose is to imitate Him most perfectly. All the rules and regulations of a religious life are directed to this same end. In a word, the whole life of the religious is a constant effort to become more and more like our Blessed Lord. How dear, then, this vocation must be to Him, and how much He must desire that all who have the calling to be religious shall be generous volunteers and shall fulfill perfectly His holy desires, by following their vocation.

It seems quite certain to those who have been studying and observing the developments of religious vocations in our country that many more of our young folk are called to this holy life than ever heed the call. For every young man that becomes a priest, there are several others who seem to possess all the requisites for the priesthood. For every young man or woman who enters religious life, there are a number of others who appear to be equally suited to this holy calling. All that is required for a religious vocation is fitness and willingness. The fitness is the result of God's Providence, preparing the individual for the work He wishes done;

willingness is the result of correspondence with those individual graces, which we call the graces of vocation, by which our Lord inwardly invites and encourages His chosen ones to leave all things and to follow Him.

The fitness required for the religious life includes sufficient health, intelligence, and education to do the work required or make the studies necessary; and, besides, a sufficient degree of virtue. It includes also freedom from obligations, such as the duty of supporting a dependent father or mother, which would keep the aspirant to religion from leaving home.

How many of our young people have all these requirements, and at the same time experience from time to time the inward invitations of God's grace, the inward lights which show to them the holiness of religious life or the priesthood, and the interior impulses which gently invite them to embrace it. Loyalty to the Sacred Heart, love of that adorable Heart, and the desire to carry out the wishes of our Lord ought to induce these young people to be brave, generous, and prompt in following their vocation. On the one side there are, it is true, the allurements of the world, the interest and variety of modern life with all its opportunities. But these things endure only for a short time and then vanish, while our Lord's rewards endure forever.

It is hard for these young folk to give up family life with all the affections and tenderness we feel toward family and friends. Yet, this family affection also endures but for a short time in this world, and those who sacrifice their family for Christ's sake will be reunited in everlasting joy in the family of the Sacred Heart, which continues forever and ever, as long as God is God. Thus, it is the part of prudence and common sense, enlightened by faith, to heed the invitation of our Lord and carry out the wishes of His Sacred Heart.

Those, who have influence over the young people whom our Lord has called to His service, in the religious life or in the priesthood, should give them every encouragement to enter and persevere in the path which our Lord has pointed out for them. Sometimes, parents or friends are unwilling to make the sacrifice of parting and so they do their best to discourage or hinder those whom our Lord

is inviting to follow Him. What a disloyalty to the interests of the Heart of Christ and what a selfish treason against those to whom our Lord has given the greatest honor and the highest privilege which He confers on mankind. How bitterly such persons afterward regret their ill-timed interference. How sadly do the young people themselves sometimes mourn a lost vocation.

We ought all to pray and to give our active help for the following of vocations. The desire of the Heart of our Lord ought to be a sufficient reason for us to disregard generously every personal interest of our own which might hinder this happy self-sacrifice done for the love of Jesus. When our Lord wishes a young man or woman to dedicate life and all its opportunities and powers to His holy service, then there is nothing better on earth than to follow His desire. In no other way can the individual be so blessed, in no other way can the family be so honored, with no other guide can the soul walk so safely along the path of love and service to God and man, as by the faithful following of Christ's vocation. Let us all, then, work together and pray together, think and speak in holy concord, to increase the number of priestly and religious vocations. What a consolation and what a service shall we thus render to the Sacred Heart of our divine Lord.

The Sacred Heart and the Catholic Missions

It is very difficult to see how anyone, who is truly devoted to the Heart of our Lord and wishes to imitate that Divine Heart, can fail to be most interested in, and active in behalf of the foreign missions. Among the many griefs which the ingratitude of mankind has inflicted upon the Heart of our Lord, surely one of the greatest must be this, that, after He has done everything to save and sanctify the whole world, so many of His own followers show so little zeal in helping to spread His faith throughout the earth. It is now nearly nineteen hundred years since our Lord died on the Cross for the salvation of all mankind. To the last throb of His Sacred Heart, He prayed for and desired that every human soul should come to the knowledge of His truth. Some wicked heresies have taught that our Lord died only for certain ones among the race of Adam. The Church rejects such teaching and condemns it. She declares that our Lord died for all mankind.

Since He gave His life, therefore, for all men, He must desire with all the love of His Sacred Heart that all men may come to the knowledge of His truth. He must wish that all His followers will do everything they can to spread that holy faith. The work of the missions must be specially dear to Him. Yet at the present time, when nineteen centuries have rolled along, when nearly thirty generations of mankind have come and gone, there are still a thousand million pagans left in the world!

Only one out of every five of the earth's swarming populations is Catholic. Only about one out of four is Christian. Two thirds of the entire human race are still sunk in paganism, and many of these wretched souls have never yet had the Gospel of Christ preached to them, they know nothing of the love of His Sacred Heart. They do not even know that God has become Man and has died for their salvation. They have received no sacraments, they have heard no Catholic teaching, they dwell in a spiritual darkness, which it is difficult for us even to conceive.

Try to imagine how the Sacred Heart of Jesus yearns over these brothers and sisters of His who are disinherited of their part in His redemption which they would receive were they members of the Church. Think how He must desire to see them all converted and come to the knowledge of the truth. But His heavenly Father has decreed that the salvation of man shall come through the ministry of man. In order that the sad thousands of millions of pagans now on earth may be converted, or may even learn the good tidings of salvation, it is necessary that we, the Catholic faithful, shall send to them missionaries who will preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and bring those peoples into the communion of the one true Church founded by Christ.

It is we, who are already Catholic, who must become apostles of the faith to the immense multitude still outside the fold. It is we who have in our hands the salvation of millions. Everyone, without exception, can help and should help to satisfy the burning thirst of the Sacred Heart for the souls of men. Everyone can pray, can offer up good works and sacrifices for the welfare of the missions, and thus can win the immense graces which are necessary to beat down the dark barriers of superstition and pride and melt the frozen hearts of the pagan nations, so that they may welcome the meek yoke of Jesus, their Saviour.

We can speak of the missions - how immense is the power of human speech to stir up interest, to spread appreciation, to convince everyone of the need and the great importance of work like that of the missions. If we are well informed ourselves and enthusiastic about mission work, we can stir up tens and hundreds of others so that they will be helpers of the missions. Then we shall participate in the immense merit which they will gain by helping a pause which is so dear to the Heart of Christ. Of course, to do this, we must ourselves read about the missions, take an interest in mission magazines and mission societies, help on the work which is being done in our parish and our city in behalf of missions.

The opportunities in the mission field of today are absolutely unlimited. We have often repeated the significant phrase, that this is the "hour of God" on the foreign missions. In former days, Catholic missionaries had to enter missionary lands in the face of

fierce opposition from the pagan governments. Many of them laid down their lives as the penalty for having dared to venture into missionary lands. The preaching of the gospel was often carried on in the face of intolerable difficulties. The missionary had to hide like a hunted animal and to gather his flock at night and in secret, to avoid death.

How changed are conditions now! Many pagan governments welcome the coming of missionaries and encourage mission activities. Many pagan hospitals have been placed, by these governments, in the care of Catholic Sisters. Schools may be opened almost everywhere and hundreds of thousands of children may be brought up in the Catholic faith. Catechists can go about and prepare whole villages for baptism, giving them preliminary instruction in the true religion, so that when the priest comes, he finds them ready for baptism.

Some of these once pagan villages have, in a few years, been raised to such a state of fervor that practically all the inhabitants go daily to Holy Communion. Indeed, some of these newly made converts put to shame, by their fervor, the carelessness of many who are born in Catholic surroundings, just as the freedom of the Church in pagan lands to conduct its schools and hospitals puts. to shame the tyranny of some governments once called Christian, which persecute Catholic education.

Thus, the gate is opened to Catholic missionaries in pagan lands. Already a little army of priests, Sisters, and Brothers are embarked on the work of the missions in every pagan country. But how many, many more are needed to accomplish all that can and should be done for the help of the missions! Every priest who goes forth into some of the more fertile fields of missionary lands means thousands of converts to the Church. Where the scholars in missionary schools are now counted by the thousand, they might number hundreds of thousands if funds were at hand to build the schools required to contain them. Where the catechists are counted by scores, they might be numbered by thousands, on the one condition that more means were at hand to pay their scanty salaries.

In many of these mission lands, the Sisters' orphanages receive great numbers of babies, some of them given to the Sisters by their

almost destitute parents, others picked up from the wayside, where they have been abandoned to die. These babies are all baptized and some of their pure souls go straight to heaven, for they die in infancy because of the dreadful treatment to which they have been subjected, before they reach the Sisters' orphanages. Others survive and are brought up good Catholics to be the founders of Catholic families. For every baby now in the orphanages, hundreds might be received and cared for if more means were at hand. Sums which seem trifling to us, which we waste on mere superfluities, would be a precious gift to the missions.

How many are there, even among the friends of the Sacred Heart, who are doing all they can, or even all they should for the welfare of the missions? Yet, if we consider the love of that Sacred Heart for souls and the sad plight of these pagan peoples, we ought to realize how much He desires us to help them. The women and children especially are in a state of the most terrible oppression, darkness, and often misery. Women are despised in these lands, which have never known the beautiful and humanizing influences of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. All that Christianity means of hope, faith, love, gentleness, and pity is wanting in these dark nations, which worship hideous idols and credit the fictions of false mythologies.

Every true follower and lover of the Sacred Heart should search his own conscience frankly and look about honestly to determine what he or she should do for the aid of the missions. Then, having summed up the worth of prayer, of zealous conversation, and of active aid of the missions which each one considers the right measure of personal effort, let us all with great, sincere self-sacrifice offer this measure of prayer, of talk, and of service to the Sacred Heart. This is genuine love for that adorable Heart; this is precious friendship, to help the foreign missions and thus satisfy Christ's thirst for souls.

The Sacred Heart and Social Charity

Harmony and mutual forbearance are necessary for the right working of Catholic societies, such as those of which we have been speaking. The very idea of a society is cooperation among the members for some common end, which all desire to obtain. Unless the work of the society is harmonious and carried on in peace and concord, nothing effective can be accomplished. It is not enough, therefore, for Catholics to go into Catholic societies, but they ought to try their best to preserve harmony in them, to keep peace and concord in all their activities.

True devotion to the Sacred Heart and a deep and practical understanding of the desires of this adorable Heart will be a strong influence for concord, cooperation, and peace. It is the wish of the Sacred Heart that all Christians should dwell together in harmony and mutual love. "Little children love one another," He says to us constantly. Whenever we see an image of the Sacred Heart, those blessed words should recur to our minds. He is the Prince of Peace! In His touching discourse to His disciples at the Last Supper, when the sentiments of His Sacred Heart welled up in burning words of loving eloquence at that last touching hour of communion with His own, He declared to them, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you" (John 14:27).

Again, in His prayer for His disciples, our Blessed Lord pleads out of the depth of His Sacred Heart, with His eyes uplifted to Heaven, that all His followers "may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). Clearly, then, it is the most ardent desire of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that the peace and concord which exist among His followers should be a sign of His Divine power and mission. Those who preserve this charity and peace, therefore, in Catholic societies, fulfill the wishes of the divine Heart of Jesus, and those who trouble and destroy this peace are going against the desires and directions of Christ.

Our human nature is, unfortunately, too much inclined to disputes, factions, cliques, and quarrels. Selfishness, and opinionativeness,

tend to produce disunion and discord. Envy and jealousy, sad indeed to say, are too often the pet vices of people who are otherwise good and well-meaning. They do not realize the reason of their dislike of and opposition to others, but the reason is a secret jealousy, an unrecognized envy which they disguise as zeal, or honest criticism, or frankness, or some similar good quality. Yet, at the bottom, their opposition and discord is based on nothing better than envious dissatisfaction at the good qualities, the prominence, or the success of others.

Real devotion to the Sacred Heart and a great desire to carry out the wishes of our divine Lord should be an effective antidote against these unhappy causes of disunion. When anyone, who truly loves our Lord, is tempted to inject some element of discord into Catholic activities, to launch some opposition, or to start or support some faction, he or she ought first of all to examine critically the real motives for such an action and to ask honestly, "What would the Sacred Heart of Jesus desire me to do in this situation?" If the motives are selfish, merely personal, still more if they are based on secret envy or quarrelsomeness, our love for the Sacred Heart ought to be enough to keep us from yielding to such a temptation.

But, if after we have thought the matter over in the presence of our Lord, it still seems to us that we have real reason to resist and oppose what is being planned or carried on in the society, then we ought to proceed with the greatest gentleness, charity, and kindness as our Lord would have done under similar circumstances. Sometimes, in the differences and disputes which injure or wreck Catholic societies, it is not so much the difference of opinion which causes the disaster, as the way in which this difference is manifested, and the resulting hard feelings and animosities. By being gentle, considerate, and kind for the sake of the Heart of our Lord, by putting ourselves in another's place and trying to enter into the views and attitude of others we can often avert disaster.

Anyone who has experience in Catholic organization and who knows how many complaints are made from time to time about the want of cooperation, of unity, and of the self-sacrifice which is required for success will realize how precious and how much required is the strength and fervor, zeal and self-control which

come from true devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our whole Catholic religion is the imitation, service, and following of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, in faith, hope, and charity. Every truly Catholic organization, however humble and obscure, or however great and important, has for its final object the love and service of Christ.

The more sincerely, therefore, we love our Lord and the more eager we are to carry out the desires of the Sacred Heart, the more we shall work and pray for the success of Catholic societies. The prayer of our Lord for peace and concord among His own will forever echo in our hearts. We shall always remember His exhortations to love one another and to help one another, and so we shall never give occasion for discord, factions, or unnecessary divisions in Catholic societies; but we shall promote always the cooperation, charity, and mutual helpfulness which are so dear to the Heart of Christ.

The Sacred Heart and the Lay Apostolate

The very meaning of the words "lay apostolate," if we ponder upon their literal significance, will show us how dear to the Sacred Heart must be this blessed service of His followers. For the words, lay apostolate, signify the share which the Catholic laity have in spreading the Gospel of Christ and helping in the work of the salvation and sanctification of souls. The word "apostle" means a "messenger," someone sent with tidings and directions. The twelve whom Christ chose to be His messengers to preach the gospel throughout the whole world were called apostles, because He sent them with a message of salvation. The bishops and priests of the Church carry on this apostolate to the end of time, preaching and teaching, instructing and admonishing as Christ bade them, throughout the whole world.

But, though the clergy are the official messengers of Christ, the laity also have a share in this tremendous work of spreading the gospel. They can do much which is beyond the power of the limited numbers of the priesthood. They can reach many hundreds of thousands of souls who keep far away from priests. They can cooperate with and help the work of the clergy to a wonderful degree, especially in this age which has been called the age of the lay apostolate. Every member of the Church has some special part in the great sum-total of effort of Christ's followers which alone will save and sanctify the world.

The works of the lay apostolate must be very dear to the Sacred Heart and He must desire very earnestly that everyone should take some part in spreading the faith, because it was for this He came down from heaven, and became man, like unto ourselves in everything except sin. For this He went through the laborious days of His hidden life. It was to save souls that Christ preached and taught and founded His holy Church. For this He gave up His life and died upon the Cross after the terrible agony and passion which were the manifestation of His love for souls. After He had risen from the dead and had spent forty days in confirming and instructing those who were to spread His faith throughout the world, our Lord ascended into heaven, leaving to us the task of

carrying on His work. But just as He was about to ascend into heaven, He gave a tremendous commission to all of us, "And He said to them: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). "And you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Those solemn words were spoken to us all. Each one in his own sphere, with his own opportunities is to be an apostle, helping to spread the good news of Christ's redemption, aiding actively the salvation of souls.

Saint Peter, Christ's first vicar on earth, in his first epistle, which he wrote at Rome about fifteen years after the ascension of our Lord, sends us this solemn message, which should reverberate in the depths of our hearts: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare His virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9). Indeed, these words come to us from the pen of Saint Peter, but from the Heart of Christ. We are all a chosen generation, we all share in the kingly priesthood, we are made holy, we are purchased by the blood of Christ, that we may declare the goodness, the mercy, the teaching, and the holy will of our Blessed Lord, Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Saint Peter goes on, in the succeeding verses of this chapter, to outline to the Catholics of his day some elements of the lay apostolate. He bids them remember that they are strangers and pilgrims in this world and to lead a holy life among the Gentiles, so that the good works they do may make the pagans glorify God. Surely this apostolate of good example is as important now and as dear to the Sacred Heart as it was in apostolic times, when the fervor of the Catholic people brought millions of pagans to give up their evil ways and enter the pure fold of Christ.

Saint Peter next bids Catholics to be good citizens, being subject for God's sake to every one who has authority. This apostolate of good citizenship is as important and as efficacious now as it was in Saint Peter's time. He exhorts servants to be subject to their masters, he praises those who are patient under wrongful abuse. In one brief

and eloquent verse, which was quoted before in another connection, he utters an exhortation to charity and dutifulness. "Honor all men," he says. "Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (I Peter 2:17).

All these exhortations apply as much to us as to the faithful of the apostolic age. We know, from the history of the Church, how marvelous was the lay apostolate in those days. The Catholics of that time gave such a holy example that the pagans were forced to admire their piety and charity. "See those Christians," they said, "how they love one another, how they cherish one another," and the spectacle of this mutual love brought many a hungry heart into the Church.

The holy lives and heroic deaths of so many virgins and martyrs were another means of spreading the faith in apostolic times. The Catholics of those days had to be ready at any time to offer their life in witness to their belief; and hundreds of thousands made this supreme sacrifice inflamed by the Divine love enkindled by the fires of the Sacred Heart. But even those who did not become martyrs by shedding their blood had to lead the lives of martyrs by preserving their purity, their faith, and their patience in the midst of a world corrupted by paganism. So, too, in our day, any man or woman who wishes to be a fervent and consistent apostle must lead a life of fervor and self-sacrifice, worthy of the heirs of the faith of the martyrs.

But the opportunities of the lay apostolate have greatly increased since the apostolic times and new avenues of lay effort, most dear to the Sacred Heart, have opened up in the Church. The marvelous spread of print has made possible the new apostolate of the written word, of Catholic literature about which we say so much and for which we do so little. We have hardly touched with our little finger this immense engine of the press which should be made as powerful for good as it is for evil.

Then there is the apostolate of organized effort, which has grown to immense possibilities but which again we are not using as we should to promote the interests of the Sacred Heart. This is the age of organizations, but, alas, how much more powerful are the organizations whose purpose it is to make money, or to promote

secular activities, or even to persecute the Church, than those societies whose aim it is to spread the kingdom of Christ.

So, too, the apostolate of instruction in all its many phases opens up before us, to a degree unprecedented in the history of the world - lecture courses, catechetical classes, study clubs, conferences, not only for Catholic children and young people, but for the vast field of inquiring intelligent non-Catholics, who wish to know something about the Church. How much we could do, how comparatively little we are doing, in these things.

Amazing discoveries, undreamed of in apostolic times, have immensely widened the possibilities of our apostolates. Moving pictures, now can bring the same message to a hundred million pairs of eyes, a message conveyed not in words, but actions and, therefore, comprehensible to all nations. How little use has been made of moving pictures to promote the interests of Christ, compared to the constant utilization of its appeal to corrupt the imagination and poison the mind. The radio makes it possible to speak to the entire nation with one feeble voice. How Saint Paul would have welcomed such an opportunity! Yet, what little use we are making of the radio to further the interests of the Sacred Heart. The home and foreign missions have an opportunity in our time which no other age has enjoyed. Modern methods of transportation have made it possible to travel to the ends of the earth with far less difficulty than' the apostles found in traversing a single kingdom. The swarming populations of the pagan world are more interested in western ideas and more receptive of Christian thought than ever before. How Christ's Sacred Heart must yearn over the sad thousand millions of pagans who are still wandering in darkness! Each one of us has a personal vocation to pray and work for the missions.

All these apostolates, and many more, are proper to our own times and most dear to the Sacred Heart. If we love our dear Lord as we should, we shall also love this work of spreading His doctrine and fulfilling His mission to save the souls of men. We need a new crusade, motived by the love of the Sacred Heart, to stir up our Catholic people to do valiant battle for the interests of Christ in present-day society. The battle cry of such a crusade may well be the same with which Peter, the hermit, stirred of old the hearts of

the sturdy knights and yeomen when he preached the wars of the cross. "God wills it, God wills it!" The Sacred Heart of Jesus wills it!

About This EBook

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The cover art is a stained glass window of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, date and artist unknown. The window is in the Saint Nikolaus church in Liesing, Austria. It was photographed on 6 October 2011 by Neithan90, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

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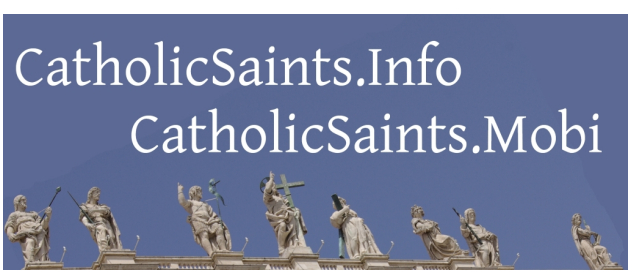
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